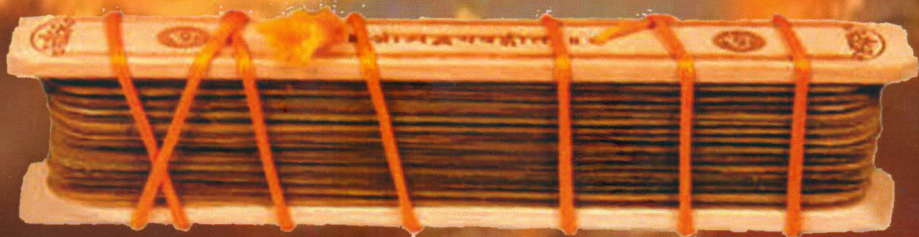




# **ETIQUETTE AND ETHOS ETHICS IN TIRUKKURAI AND ĀCĀRAKKŌVAI**



**Govindaswamy Rajagopal**

**SUN INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS**

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**ETIQUETTE AND ETHOS**  
**ETHICS OF TIRUKKURĀḷ AND ĀCĀRAKKŌVAI**

GOVINDASWAMY RAJAGOPAL  
Associate Professor of Tamil  
Deptt. of Modern Indian Languages and Literary Studies  
University of Delhi, Delhi-110 007

Email: grajagopald@gmail.com  
Mobile: 9818487876

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Dedicated to

**Prof. S. Ulaganathan,**

a fine human being, a beloved Tamil teacher  
and an inspirational guide.



## Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>Foreword</i>	xi
<i>Preface</i>	xvii
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xxi
1. Virtues in Tirukkuraḷ and Other Tamil Didactic Works: A Bird's Eye view.	1
2. Familiar Terms and Unfamiliar Connotations: Cultural Overtones in Tirukkuraḷ.	23
3. Sleeping to Salvation: Vedic Code and Practices.	85
<i>References</i>	143
<i>Index</i>	147





## Acknowledgements

This book comprising three essays is an attempt to illustrate some major virtues and certain unique recurring Tamil terms *viz.* *cāṇrōṇ* (noble man), *nōkku* (sight of love), *naṭpu* (love *i.e.* sexual relationship), *virundu* (novelty), *nanri* (good deed), and *nārram* (fragrance) rendered in the universally acclaimed *Tirukkuraḷ* and injunctions of Vedic codes and practices pronounced in *Ācāraḱkōvai*, an exceptional ethical work of the post-Sangam period (c. A.D. 200–600).

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14<sup>th</sup> September 2016

Govindaswamy Rajagopal

## Foreword

Tamil, one of the ancient languages still thriving till date, has enviable number of world class literature. Time and again, reading and re-reading it's universally acclaimed didactic work *Tirukkuraḷ*, classical epics *Cilappatikāram* and *Kamba Rāmāyaṇam* and ever moving powerful poems of Mahakavi Subramaṇiya Bharatiyar, in fact, always immensely amuse and hugely impart immeasurable insights to me on myriad things. Surely, one can acquire so much of aesthetic pleasure, delightful truths and high ethical values from these brilliant literary pieces. Plentiful research studies, of course with divergent agenda, are being systematically conducted on almost all Tamil literary texts since colonial period. Now, here is a book authored by Govindaswamy Rajagopal, one of my acquaintances of nearly three decades, entitled “*Etiquette and Ethos: Ethics of Tirukkuraḷ and Ācārakkōvai*” to be added to the exciting repository of Tamil research studies.

This book containing three essays – two on *Tirukkuraḷ* and one on *Ācārakkōvai* – is a fascinating critical study. As we are aware, the *Tirukkuraḷ* is ‘a scripture of maxims of truth’ meant for everyone to be adhered to practically. The book, a mine of facts, is a treatise of ethical values suitable for everyone, be they kings, ministers, soldiers, husbands, wives, parents, children and so on. Though sounds strange yet it is also an aesthetic guidebook for lovers too. The other text *Ācārakkōvai* is an exceptional Tamil didactic work which religiously speaks of a volume of Vedic codes and practices. It is a slender but effective manual for traditional people who are familiar with decrees and observances

endorsed by age-old Hinduism. Contents of these ethical works clearly spell out their true nature and stature for themselves. While the former scripture profoundly discourses on each and everything for the welfare of whole humanity, the latter instinctively dialogues on almost all canons and ritual entities concerned largely with a particular section or a community of humanity.

In the first chapter titled “*Virtues in Tirukkuraḷ and Other Tamil Didactic Works: A Bird’s Eye View*”, the author G. Rajagopal, though not elaborately yet diligently, discusses certain core ethics endorsed by Tiruvaḷḷuvar. He has adeptly shown that the frequent wars among the traditional rulers of Tamil Nadu viz. Cēra, Cōḷa, and Pāṇḍiya, their subsequent loss of political power to the intruders Kalabhras (of Karnataka), increasing influence of North over Tamil country and the internal uncertainty prevailing in post-Sangam age (c. A.D. 200–600) – all these factors have contributed to the advent of *Tirukkuraḷ* for guiding people well in righteous path.

Then, the author has candidly quoted Tiruvaḷḷuvar’s definition about *aṟam* (virtue) saying that “whatever is done with a spotless mind is *aṟam* (virtue); all else is vain show” (*TKḷ* 44). While rightly illustrating how Tiruvaḷḷuvar emphasizes the importance of household life over ascetic existence, the author amply illustrates the content of a couplet: “A householder who, not swerving from virtue, helps the ascetic in his way endures more than those who endure penance” (*TKḷ* 48). Rajagopal justly opines that Tiruvaḷḷuvar seems to have been influenced much by the tenets of Jainism and Buddhism. So, he candidly observes that the universal moral preacher earnestly discourses a volume of ethics for men to abstain themselves from killing beings and meat-eating, staying away from boozing and gambling, keeping away from stealing, lying and infidelity and so on. Later, at the end of the chapter, the author has pertinently highlighted some

fine virtues related to learning, friendship, chastity, wealth, hospitality *etc.*, as they have been illustrated in other Tamil didactic works.

The second chapter titled “*Familiar Terms and Unfamiliar Connotations: Cultural Overtones in Tirukkuraḷ*” is an in depth textual study on certain unique Tamil terms *viz.* *cāṇṇrōr* (noble men), *nōkku* (sight of love), *naṭpu* (love *i.e.* the sexual relationship), *virundu* (novelty), *naṇṇri* (good deed), and *nāṇṇram* (fragrance) as rendered in the classical Sangam works and *Tirukkuraḷ*. The author shows with good examples how the peculiar term *cāṇṇrōr* originally meant ‘men of heroic deeds’ in the Sangam age which later came to denote “the learned” and “the men of noble characters” in *Tirukkuraḷ* days. The author then discourses thoughtfully on the etymological and semantic aspects of other terms too quite amusingly. Pretty interestingly, he has dealt with the term *nōkku* and establishes pertinently its original meaning *i.e.* “the sight of love”. He has ably illustrated its principal connotation by employing the following analogy: “*Pār-Kāṇ-Nōkku*” (See-View-Look)”. In similar manner, the author has dealt with the remaining terms too and thereby appropriately elucidated their primary meanings. In his precise analysis, *naṭpu* denotes “love” *i.e.* “the sexual relationship found naturally between mature male and female” but not “the usual friendship between people of same sex”; *virundu*, “novelty/newness/unknown people” but not “guest” or “feast”; *naṇṇri*, “good deed” or “fine actions” but not “gratefulness”/“gratitude”; *nāṇṇram*, “fine fragrance”/“good smell” but not “bad” or “rotten smell”, the prevailing meanings of these terms nowadays. The author has effectively shown how some commentators and translators failed to capture exact meanings of these terms contextually by taking their current meanings wrongly into consideration. To establish the early meanings of the afore-

said recurring terms, Rajagopal has meticulously cited a volume of Sangam poems and a number of couplets from *Tirukkuraḷ* to substantiate his impressive proposition.

The third chapter titled “*Sleeping to Salvation: Vedic Codes and Practices*” is a scholarly study of Brāhmāṇic injunctions pronounced in the didactic text *Ācārakkōvai*. It poignantly deliberates on all codes and conducts – that one needs to adhere sincerely to in his/her inner (home) and outer (public) spheres. To my knowledge, this study is the first attempt which critically as well as exhaustively analyzes *Ācārakkōvai*, the unique Tamil ethical text. The author’s approach to this treatise of Vedic *Dharmaśāstra* is, indeed, heartening and commendable. He has dealt with the verses of this didactic work very systematically. And methodically he analyzed customary behaviours and ritual observances that any traditional person needs to adhere to in his/her daily life – from dawn to dusk, waking to sleeping, eating to excreting, and *svarg* to *narak*.

The author Rajagopal has credibly cited a number of *smritis* (pronouncements) of Manu and decrees of others in the quest for establishing the religious influence of North over South (Tamil Nadu) in the earlier days. While explaining the valid reasons that operate in the dictums of certain Vedic codes and practices, the author points out irrationality and non-adaptability of certain observances and rituals in day-today life of common man. His humorous disagreements at some contexts are quite entertaining.

This extensive but erudite essay at the end rightly concludes saying: “Essentially, everyone should adhere genuinely to the core etiquette and ethos of their society wherein they live for his/her happiness and that of fellow beings. Perhaps, in the quest for shepherding humans in the righteous path, the *Dharmaśāstras* and *Ācārakkōvai* reiterate the [...] abstract forts viz. ‘heaven’ and

‘hell’ by employing the typical strategy of reward or punishment to people’s virtuous conducts and evil deeds respectively”.

By and large, the sincere academic endeavour conducted by Rajagopal, indeed, merits appreciation. I congratulate him wholeheartedly on coming out with such thought provoking essays. I hope, this intense study will fascinate people who are interested in knowing different ethical rules and regulations, beliefs and practices that were postulated in the post-Sangam era.

Pulavar R. Vishwanathan  
A-3-C, DDA Flats  
Munirka  
New Delhi - 110067





## Preface

Tamil, an ancient language flourishing well before the arrival of Jesus Christ, is the first vernacular duly declared as a classical language by the Union Government of India on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2004. It has a rich repertoire of brilliant grammatical texts and excellent literary works. Its *Tolkāppiyam* (c. 200–100 B.C.), the earliest grammatical treatise, the primary anthologies viz. *Eṭṭuttogai* (Eight Anthologies) and *Pattuppāṭṭu* (Ten Idylls) called “Sangam Literature” (c. 150–200 B.C.) comprising 2381 lyrics, *Tirukkural*, (c. 200–250 B.C.), ‘the Universal Tamil Scripture’, and *Cilappadigāram* (c. 250–300 B.C.), ‘the first Tamil epic’, are, in fact, no longer confined to Tamil territory alone but have already become a part of world classics.

As we are aware, every language or linguistic community has its own distinct ethnic culture with different customs, ethos, ethics, codes and conducts, rules and regulations developed and cherished for years. Being an independent and a distinctive language of India, Tamil has rich cultural heritage spanning a period of over 2000 years. As Tamil ethnicity historically belonged to ‘Heroic Age’ (c. 3000 B.C.–A.D. 300), the ethnic group had upheld equally at par both *akam* (love feelings) and *puram* (heroic deeds and values) sentiments in their lives as their two eyes. As the monarchical era of kings was vested with absolute power along with atrocities and ceaseless battles/wars over wealth and territory, there were chaotic and terrible situations prevailing in the country. So in the much disturbed condition, didactic poets like Tiruvalluvar penned how life should be lived and what sort of

moral percepts and codes and conducts should govern it. Also the increasing influence of North over South in general, and over Tamil country in particular during the post-Sangam period contributed much to the development of didactic literature in Tamil. Thereby a versifier named Kayattūr Peruvāyiṉ Muḷḷiyār brought out a unique ethical text called *Ācārakkōvai* which wholly endorses the Vedic codes and practices to Tamils.

Needless to say, all literary creations including essays on literary themes, either implicitly or explicitly, discourse about some cultural aspect of a given language of an ethnicity. In a literary text, even a simple or ordinary word, besides its literal or primary meaning, may invoke a ‘unique cultural connotation’ of an ethnic group. To realize its ‘hidden meaning’, one needs to probe or decode the given word contextually rather than just literally. In this endeavour, the period in which the literary text is produced is paramount for comprehending its “Cultural Poetics”.

As observed elsewhere, we are aware of the fact that man is a social being. Subsequently, the manner/conduct/behaviour of one’s ‘inner-self’ (heart) may be generally termed as ‘culture’. The term refers to ‘a way of life of a group of people, cumulative deposit of their knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notion of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving’. Culture in its broadest sense is cultivated behaviour, that is the totality of the person’s learned, accumulated experience which is socially transmitted, or more briefly, behaviour through social learning. Contrary to this, the actions or reflections of man’s ‘outer-self’ (body/physique) may be termed as ‘civilization’. No one’s/no ethnicity’s culture and civilization remain intact forever. Naturally, they tend to change/transform in due course of time according to the demand

of situations. A person who acts in certain manner at a particular time shall have change in his/her conduct of the ‘inner’ and ‘outer-selves’. The socio-political-economic-religious conditions of a given period do act as factors behind his/her culture and civilization. The vicissitudes and fluctuations that influence the ‘inner’ and ‘outer-selves’ of a person/an ethnicity can be termed as ‘cultural mobility’.

Considering the universally acclaimed *Tirukkuraḷ* as the epitome of ancient Tamils’ ethics, and the unique didactic text called *Ācārakkōvai* as the sole illustration of Brāhmaṇism preaching every code and conduct of Vedic creed, the essays in the present book try to decipher some unique terms and certain Vedic codes and practices endorsed therein. The first essay titled **“Virtues in Tirukkuraḷ and Other Tamil Didactic Works – A Bird’s Eye View”**, though not thorough yet discusses in detail some major virtues and some evil deeds stated in *Tirukkuraḷ*, *Nālaḍiṃyār*, *Paḷamoḷi Nāṇūru*, *Ācārakkōvai*, *Cīrupaṇcamūlam* etc. The second essay entitled **“Familiar Terms and Unfamiliar Connotations: Cultural Overtones in Tirukkuraḷ”** expressly deliberates thoroughly on certain unique terms such as *cāṇṟōr* (noble men), *nōkku* (sight of love), *naṭpu* (love *i.e.* the sexual relationship), *virundu* (novelty), *naṇṟi* (good deed), and *nāṟram* (fragrance) as rendered in the classical Sangam works and *Tirukkuraḷ* – the specific recurring terms of cultural significance. These terms nonetheless effectively do reflect the socio-political-religious-cultural life of the Tamils of the preceding era. By expounding the chronological account of the origin and development of these peculiar terms in the Sangam poems and more specifically in *Tirukkuraḷ*, the essay brings forth the cultural mobility or shift that has taken place in the lives of Tamils. The third essay titled **“Sleeping to Salvation: Vedic Codes and Practices”** intensely discourses on the Brāhmaṇic injunctions

pronounced in the didactic text *Ācārakkōvai*. It poignantly deliberates on all codes and conducts – that one needs to adhere sincerely to in his/her inner (home) and outer (public) spheres – as prescribed by the poet Kayattūr Peruvāyiṇ Muḷḷiyār. The study though not comprehensive yet discourses diligently on certain predominant virtues and Vedic codes and practices illustrated in *Tirukkural*, and other Tamil didactic works.

I hope these essays would kindle adequate interest to revisit the entire corpus of Tamil Didactic texts in terms of their cultural connotation and ritual codes and practices prescribed to Tamils of bygone era.

14<sup>th</sup> September 2016

Govindaswamy Rajagopal

## Abbreviations

A.D.	=	<i>Anno Domini</i> means “in the year of the Lord” (Christ)
<i>ĀK</i>	=	<i>Ācārakkōvai</i>
<i>ANU</i>	=	<i>Akanāṇūru</i>
B.C.	=	Before Christ (Era)
<i>c.</i>	=	<i>circa</i> means “approximately”
<i>Cf.</i>	=	<i>Confer</i> < <i>Conferre</i> means “compare” or “see also”
Ed.	=	Editor
Eds.	=	Editors
ed.	=	edition
<i>e.g.</i>	=	<i>exempli gratia</i> means “for example”
<i>et al.</i>	=	<i>et alii</i> means “and others”
<i>etc.</i>	=	<i>et cetera</i> means “and other things”, or “and so forth”
<i>Ibid.</i>	=	<i>Ibidem</i> means “in the same place”
<i>i.e.</i>	=	<i>id est</i> means “that is”
<i>KLT</i>	=	<i>Kalittogai</i>
<i>KRT</i>	=	<i>Kuruntogai</i>
lit.	=	literally
<i>NḌR</i>	=	<i>Nālaḍiyār</i>
<i>NRI</i>	=	<i>Narriṇai</i>
<i>Op.cit.</i>	=	<i>Opere citato</i> means “in the work cited”
p.	=	page
pp.	=	pages
<i>PPL</i>	=	<i>Paripāḍal</i>
<i>PNU</i>	=	<i>Puṛanāṇūru</i>
Pub.	=	Publisher
Rpt.	=	Reprint
Skt.	=	Sanskrit
Tr.	=	Translation

<i>TKL</i>	=	<i>Tirukkural</i>
TVR	=	Tiruvalluvar
<i>viz.</i>	=	namely

## Chapter – One

### Virtues in Tirukkural and Other Tamil Didactic Works – A Bird’s Eye View\*

Literature, like any other art, has a specific role to play in society. Any literature has dual functions *i.e.* ‘to entertain’ and ‘to instruct’ humanity. While entertaining, literature would also impart a specific message to society. Besides, a literary text has several functions such as cognitive, expressive, persuasive, aesthetic and so on. A literary text where the persuasive function is dominant is called *didactic* and the text where the aesthetic function is prevailing is called *literature* proper, even though it also conveys a message indirectly. The term *didactic* is a derivative of the Greek root *didaktikos* (*dedasko* = teach) meaning ‘apt at teaching’<sup>1</sup>. As such, literature, which intends primarily to teach the humans, could be called ‘*Didactic Literature*’. Incidentally the seeds of didactic literature can be noticed right from the ancient Tamil poems popularly known as **Sangam literature** (c. 250 B.C.–A.D. 200). Through the modes of *akam* (love poems) and *puram* poems (other than love themes such as polity, war, munificence, *etc.*), the poets did administer a volume of morals, both directly and indirectly through the characters in keeping with the poetic tradition. Out of these two modes, the *puram* poems, being lyrical, have a good deal of opportunities to instruct, yet keeping the poetic function dominant.



Didactic tone though rarely found in *akam* poems but is seen often in the *pālai* (parched wasteland region signifying separation) love poems. A newly married young husband intends to go abroad for earning and leading a comfortable life. Having come to know of his mind, the *tōli* (the confidante/girlfriend of the heroine) tries to dissuade him from taking such a painful mission for material life. She eloquently makes him understand that when one is blessed with youth and requited love, what other good is there for such a one to expect from wealth except living with a wife in an inseparable union that is true living (*Kalittogai* 18).<sup>2</sup> This is one of the love poems on *pālai* theme portrayed in *Kalittogai* – an anthology of 150 love poems. Through this love poem, the poet (of course through *tōli*) imparts the message that neither wealth nor youth nor even passionate love is permanent in this world. He emphasizes that living with wife even in penury is much more meaningful than searching for a comfortable materialistic life leaving the wife in the house alone.

### Adhering to Morality: A Virtue

In the *puram* poems (which are mostly addressed directly to kings/chieftains/elders/common people *et al*), the poets used to convey precisely the message of morality. Guided by the principles of virtue, they don't hesitate to advise or even to admonish kings at times when they intend to violate the path of virtue. For example, a poet Kōvūr Kiḷār successfully thwarts the execution of two young boys (to be trampled upon by the elephants' legs) of Malaiyamān who was vanquished in a battle by the Cōḷa king namely Kiḷli vaḷavaṇ (*PNU* 46).<sup>3</sup>

We come across numerous poems in *puram* where poets convey various virtues on divergent subject matters such as God, world, wealth, administration, duties of king/minister/officer/artisans/citizens and so on. The pronouncement on virtues was very

loud and clear in the body of literature produced during the post-Sangam period (c. A.D. 200–600). Out of the ‘Eighteen Minor Works’ known as *Paḍiṇeṇ Kīlkkanaṅku Nūlgaḷ* – composed in a particular metre called *veṇṇpā*<sup>4</sup>, only Eleven works<sup>5</sup> are didactic in nature, while the remaining Seven works<sup>6</sup> are non-didactic dealing with *akam* and *puṇam* themes of the Sangam literature.

The increasing influence of the North over the Tamil land during the post-Sangam period contributed much to the development of didactic literature in Tamil. The traditional rulers of this period such as the Cēra, Cōḷa, and Pāṇḍiyas seemed to have lost their political power to intruders, popularly known as Kalabhras (of Karnataka) and consequently, there was a lot of disturbance in the peaceful life of the people. In an age of internal uncertainty and near chaos, the poets showed (of course through their poems) how life should be lived and what kind of moral percepts and codes of conduct should govern it.

### **Tirukkural: The Embodiment of Ancient Tamils’ Ethics**

**Tirukkural** (c. A.D. 200–250), ‘the Universal Tamil Scripture’ is composed by Tiruvaḷḷuvar in the post-Sangam period. It is the scripture – next only to the **Holy Bible** (Christianity), the **Holy Quran** (Islam) and the **Bhagavad Gita** (Hinduism) – widely translated into more than eighty languages. Its non-sectarian views are its uniqueness. “It is a grand mosaic of cultural creation, a repertory of universal thoughts and truths. It is the one Book for all times and a world that lives by it shall enjoy eternal peace, harmony, health, wealth, power, grace and bliss” (Bharati 2008: iii). No matter is out of reach for *Tirukkural* (TKL). One can find each and every thing – from the Godhead to ordinary entities – in it. “It gives the light of right life, the wealth of practical wisdom, the milk of heart’s abundance, the honey of conjugal bliss, and the joy of peace and harmony at home and the

wider homeland. It is the Gospel of ‘love and give’, a code of soul-luminous (*sic.* soul-illuminating) life. The whole (of) human aspiration is epitomized in the immortal book – a book for all ages” (*Ibid*).

‘The Maxims of Truth’ is an eternal guiding light to humanity. It preaches ethical values, to live in moral purity, spiritual knowledge and eternal wisdom. The didactic work is a wonderful guide for any individual, be they householder, homemaker, worker, artist, teacher, scholar, industrialist, politician or ruler. It consists of three sections *viz.* *Aram* (Virtue), *Poruḷ* (Wealth) and *Iṇbam* (Love). It clearly brings out the ideals of an enchanting family life and the excellence and beauty of ascetic life in the first section. The second section elaborates the procedures of an able administration of a country. The third section deals with the delicate and fine feelings of love. It comprises 133 chapters of ten couplets each with a total of 1330. It has used about 12000 words in total, out of which less than 50 are Sanskrit. This classical ethical work employs as few words as possible *i.e.* just seven words (always seven *cīrs*, seven metrical units) in every couplet to express a universal fact/truth. Not a single syllable is superfluous.

Among the eleven didactic works of post-Sangam period (*c.* A.D. 200–600), *Tirukkuraḷ* holds the prime place for its excellent form and vivacious content comprising all kinds of virtues. It is composed in ‘*kuraḷ veṇpā*’ – a two-line verse; the first line having four *cīrs* (foot) and the second line having three *cīrs*. Since the whole work is scribed in *kuraḷ* verses, it bears the name *Tirukkuraḷ*. Dealing with ‘Virtue’, ‘Wealth’, and ‘Love’ separately in 38, 70 and 25 *Adhikārams* (Chapters), ten couplets in each *adhikāram* respectively, altogether *Tirukkuraḷ* has 1330 *kuraḷ veṇpās*. The concept of virtue has been explained in 380 *kuraḷs*, whereas 700 *kuraḷs* speak at length about the dynamics of poli-

tics, qualities of a king as well as the subjects related to individuals. The ideal aspects of human love are aesthetically described in the last 250 *kuraḷs*. On the whole, each *kuraḷ* dwells on a particular human quality or principle for the meaningful existence in the world.

The first *adhikāram* entitled ‘*kaḍavuḷ vāḷttu*’ (Praise of God) does speak about the characteristics of Godhead in general and about the imperative need of the humanity to aspire and achieve set goals in life. Since it does not speak of any particular God, uniquely it remains non-sectarian in temper, though theistic in spirit. While defining ‘virtue’ in the *adhikāram* entitled ‘*araṇ valiyuṟuttal*’ (The Power of Virtue), TVR says, “whatever is done with a spotless mind is virtue; all else is vain show” (*TKL* 44). As a firm believer in the retributive law of virtue, he cautions, “even through forgetfulness one should not think of ruining others. If he/she does, then virtue will ruin him/her” (*TKL* 204). When people are very much concerned about gaining at least something at the cost of forsaking ethical means, Tiruvaḷḷuvar firmly rejects this view. “Whether or not one is able to achieve the cherished goal, the means followed to reach that goal should always be a noble one”, thus he reiterates in several of his *kuraḷs*. “Even if one sees his own mother starving, to relieve it one should not do the deeds noblemen reprove” (*TKL* 656). As a great moralist, Tiruvaḷḷuvar emphasizes that the humans should lead a life of high ideals. A virtuous life sometime may be a hindrance to worldly life, still it is worth-living. “It is better to die than lead a deceitful life of a backbiter. It will give him the benefit of what the *aram* (Skt. *Dharma*) prescribes” (*TKL* 183).

### Leading Household Life: A Greater Virtue

Giving equal importance in his work to those who lead household life and to those who lead an ascetic life, TVR emphasizes both

are the ways, though different may be, to attain the goal in this birth. While speaking about the importance of domestic life and its greatness he attests, “he (householder) will be said to flourish in domestic virtue who aids the forsaken, the poor and the dead” (*TKL* 42, *Ibid.*, p. 11); “A householder who, not swerving from virtue, helps the ascetic in his way endures more than those who endure penance” (*TKL* 48, *Ibid.*). Whereas, hailing the greatness of ascetic life, he pronounces, “whatever thing, whatever thing, a man has renounced; by that thing, by that thing, (I say), he cannot suffer pain” (*TKL* 341, *Ibid.*, p. 71). “He who clings to attachment – to him do sorrows cling” (*TKL* 347). For the successful ascetic life, he prescribes several virtues to be followed in life: mercy, not killing other beings, abstinence from meat-eating, penance, steering clear of hypocrisy, and fraud, truthfulness, eschewing anger, and causing suffering, evanescence of life, renunciation, realization of truth, extinction of desires and fate.

Tiruvalluvar, perhaps largely influenced by Buddhism and Jainism, recommends virtues aiming at dissuading the ascetic from committing social sins. For example, not to eat meat, not to resort to hypocrisy, not to cheat, not to cause injury and insult, not to destroy life – all these injunctions are aimed at weaning away the ascetic from anti-social enterprises. Once freed from such social blemishes, the ascetic could easily overcome other obstacles on the path of his spiritual journey. In a way, the recommended virtues for ascetics by TVR denote the reality of that period in which not all ascetics were free from social sins. In the disguise of ascetic/seer/sage/hermit, *etc.* nowadays we come across countless anti-socials that could be due to various factors such as easy accessibility to wealth, women, power and so on, but strange, it appears that in the ancient period this kind of anti-socials had also existed but with a degree of difference. That is why, it seems, TVR prescribes certain virtues to ascetics, aiming at making them

perfect souls. Abstinence from killing and staying away from meat-eating, extinction of desires, hypocrisy, *etc.* may not observed by a householder. Whereas these virtues are obligatory and should be observed strictly by ascetics, thus pronounces TVR. “Not to kill and eat (the flesh of) an animal is better than the pouring forth of ghee in a thousand sacrifices” (*TKḷ* 259, *Ibid.*, p. 53); “It is asked, what is the sum of all virtuous conduct? It is, never to destroy life. On the contrary, (the destruction of life) killing leads to every evil deed” (*TKḷ* 321, *Ibid.*, p. 67). As the easy way to attain salvation, TVR emphatically pronounces, “should anything be desired, freedom from births should be desired; that (freedom from births) will be attained by desiring to be without desire” (*TKḷ* 362, *Ibid.*, p. 75).

### **Chastity: A Must Virtue for Both Men and Women**

Keeping with the tradition of the Sangam age, TVR in the *adhi-kāram* entitled ‘*vāḷḷkait tuṇainalam*’ (The virtue of a wife), glorifies a wife by attributing several good qualities. “What is there more precious than a wife, if she possesses the stability of chastity?” (*TKḷ* 54); “Whatever blessing there may be, should the wife be without the virtues of the housewife, there could be no happiness” (*TKḷ* 52); “What is it that one lacks if one’s wife is virtues? What is it that one’s wife is devoid of virtue?” (*TKḷ* 53). Thus, in the remaining seven *kuṛaḷs* too, TVR attributes several good qualities to a wife, which are no doubt male-oriented. “They are injunctions from society and she has to make herself worthy of praise. This chapter represents the changed climate of the age from idealized jewel of the home who had to sacrifice several strands of freedom enjoyed in the previous age. Puranic and mythical benefits are showered on her in recompense for the loss” (Manavalan 1990: 237).

In three other *adhikārams* (15, 91, 92) entitled ‘*piṛaṇil viḷai-yāmai*’ (Against desiring another’s wife), ‘*peṇvaḷic cēral*’ (On submission to wife rule), and ‘*varaiviṇ magalir*’ (On Prostitutes) also, Tiruvaḷḷuvar speaks about women. He dissuades man from coveting another’s wife in the chapter ‘*peṇvaḷic cēral*’. One who desires another man’s wife is castigated as a wretched and sinful being worthy of social derision. The voice of Tiruvaḷḷuvar is: “Hatred, sin, fear and disgrace – these four will never leave him who goes into his neighbour’s wife” (*TKL* 146); “The folly of desiring her, who is the property of another will not be found in those who know (the attributes of) virtue and (the rights of) property” (*TKL* 141).

While the chapter ‘*vāḷkkait tuṇainalam*’ exhorts the wife to guard her chastity as her primary duty, the chapter ‘*piṛaṇil viḷai-yāmai*’, exhorts the man not to desire another man’s wife. In both cases, the wife is considered a life property not to cross her doorstep herself nor anyone should infringe upon the law of property by crossing over to her. A.A. Manavalan opines: “The situation gradually changed and before or around the dawn of the Christian Era, concept of personal property as a social system came into being and the warrior class, merchant class and the disintegrated chieftains of Vēḷir class became owner of property. As with the kings for territory, these newly propertied classes might have started violating the social laws by force of might. Such ‘might is right’ situation needed some check. The period of Didactic Literature, *i.e.* from the *c.* A.D. 200 to 600 might have witnessed such effort at stabilization of social rights” (*Ibid.*, pp. 237-38).

In the same vein of exhorting the women to protect their chastity, Tiruvaḷḷuvar censures men against visiting prostitutes. In the chapter ‘*varaiviṇ magalir*’, he severely condemns the menfolk who visit prostitutes. He asserts: “Those whose knowledge is made excellent by their (natural) sense will not covet the trifling

delights of those whose favours are common (to all)”, (TKĻ 915, Tr. Drew and John Lazarus 1983: 185). Subsequently TVR seems to be ‘the first Tamil poet-moralist’ to emphasize male chastity.

### **Boozing, Gambling and Begging: Evil Deeds**

In a similar tone Tiruvalluvar also condemns other social evils such as drinking toddy/liquor, gambling, begging *etc.* Drinking ‘kal’ (toddy) was a common food culture among the people of the Sangam period. Nowhere in the entire body of Sangam corpus, drinking is condemned as an evil. Whereas, TVR highlights the evils of drinking. “Let no liquor be drunk; it is desired, let it be drunk by those who care not for esteem of the great” (TKĻ 922); “They that sleep resemble the dead; they that drunk are no other than poison-eaters” (TKĻ 926). Thus he reasons out against the drinking of liquor.

As a great moralist, perhaps aware of the consequences of gambling portrayed in *Mahābhārat*, TVR severely criticizes gambling as a serious social evil. “Never indulge in gambling, profitable though it may be. Gambling gains spell danger like the angler’s bait to the fish” (TKĻ 931); “There is nothing else that brings poverty like gambling which causes many a misery and destroys (one’s) reputation” (TKĻ 934, *Ibid.*, p. 189), thus he warns.

Ethically, Tiruvalluvar seems to be critical of the preceding heroic age (c. 3000 B.C.–A.D. 300), where imploring for food and fortune by the learned and the needy was an unpleasant part of human life. Considering begging as a wretched social disease, he serves the dictum that one should not beg even if it affords him ‘heaven’. “There is nothing more disgraceful to one’s tongue than to use it in begging for a drought of water even for a cow” (TKĻ 1066, *Ibid.*, p. 215), thus he shows his concern. Worried much for the people who live in utter poverty, he declares, “if the Creator



of the world has decreed even begging as means of livelihood, may he too go a begging and perish” (*TKL* 1062, *Ibid.*). But in an altogether different point of view – contrary to discouraging begging TVR glorifies, “whatsoever is spoken in the world will abide as praise upon that man who gives alms to the poor” (*TKL* 232, *Ibid.*, p. 49); “To beg is evil, even though it were said that is a good path (to heaven). To give is good even though it were said that those who do so cannot obtain heaven” (*TKL* 222, *Ibid.*, p. 47). Thus, on the one hand, he severely discourages begging, on the other hand, he sincerely encourages giving alms to the poor, against any odds. Not in a position to alleviate the miseries of the jobless poor other than appealing to the rich to help them, TVR seems to be suggesting a humanitarian viewpoint: the haves should support the have-nots, in the their own interest of not causing a potential revolution against their own lot.

Being a poet-moralist, who lived during the heyday of monarchical rule, Tiruvalluvar prescribes various virtues to be observed in politics too, which are relevant even today. In the chapter (55) *ceṅkōṇmai* (On the rule of the right sceptre), he points out: “The world will constantly embrace the feet of the monarch who rules his subjects with love” (*TKL* 544). Again to a monarch, “It is not the spear but the unbending sceptre (or rule of law) that will yield victory” (*TKL* 546). “A ruler who extracts money from his subjects unjustly is no better than a highway-robber holding a lance and dispossessing the victims of their wealth” (*TKL* 552). “The tears of grief shed by the oppressed subjects are a strong weapon which will wipe off a monarch’s wealth” (*TKL* 555). Thus what all he pronounced as royal codes for the kings/monarchs of his days, that all could even now be applicable to the democratic rulers. Despite far reaching changes in the material life of the people due to scientific discoveries in the preceding and present centuries, transcending all limitations, more than ninety percent of

Tiruvalluvar's ideas on individuals and state are aptly applicable to the present-day world. It is indeed a herculean task rather very difficult to discuss here all the virtues emphasized by TVR in his *TKL* which remain the best archetypal literary expression of the didactic genre in Tamil.

### Major Virtues Illustrated in Nālaḍiyār

Next to *Tirukkural*, the universally acclaimed didactic work, the second best known Tamil work in this genre is *Nālaḍiyār* (*NDR*), a composition of 400 quatrains in *veṇpā* metre. It is a joint literary work of a group of Jaina authors collected and classified by Padumaṇār whose date is unknown. The tone of the work is strongly ascetic and cynical. It emphasizes more or less the same virtues advocated in the *TKL* but in a different manner. The *NDR*, exactly like *TKL*, has three divisions or sections entitled 'Arattuppāl' (The section on 'Virtue'), 'Poruṭpal' (The section on 'Wealth') and 'Inbattuppāl' (the section on 'Love') and each section comprises several chapters. Very much true to the Jaina philosophy, *NDR* has several quatrains which emphasize virtuous ways of life so that it prefers a life of renunciation to domestic state. Many verses describe the transient nature of the world which includes body, wealth, etc. "Even the rich people, who had selected the best of delicacies served by their wives might go begging for gruel at times. Therefore never think that wealth is a permanent one" (*NDR* 1), thus it warns about the impermanence of wealth. About the transient nature of body, it pronounces: "The orchard loses its glamour once the fruit-gathering season is over. Likewise youth loses all its elegance with the passage of time. Do not be taken up by her sharp spear-shaped bewitching eyes. Her alluring beauty and youth will give way to old age. Bent down with age and indifferent sight, she will guide herself with a stick" (*NDR* 17). "Speech falters, they lean on a staff, and walk totter-

ing, this teeth fall out; yet till the vessel (body) is scorned by all they linger in the house, still indulging in fond desires; to these no way of safety opens out" (*NDR* 13).

These verses clearly indicate the change of worldview (from the point of Jaina monks) from *TKL* which prefers domestic life to the other. Both *TKL* and *NDR* agree to a great extent on personal virtues. While the former treats the theme of transient nature of the world in one chapter, the latter elaborates it in three separate chapters describing the evanescence of youth, the body and the worldly pleasures. In keeping with its emphasis on life-negation, the *NDR* discredits the beauty and charm of women and even praising the virtue of chastity, it accords rather less glory to women than *TKL*.

Its emphasis on education is more eloquent and elaborate than that of *TKL* in some respects.

Learning knows no bounds: The learner's days are few.  
Think of it with calm: There's a lot of maladies.  
Learn with clear discrimination what there is to learn,  
Like the heron which leaves water and drinks milk.  
(*NDR* 135, Tr. Kamil Zvelebil 1974: 124)

Being an anthology of verses composed by several unknown poets, there are some verses which contradict themselves in certain maxims such as nobility of birth, concept attributing high or low to a person and so on.

According to Jaina philosophy, an individual meets with fortune or misfortune, possesses good character or bad, in accordance with the laws of *karma*. One cannot swim against the current of a wild river. Similarly, one cannot go against what is decreed to him. Whereas, according to Hinduism, one could thwart destiny through one's ceaseless, conscious efforts or through his association with the great and the wise men. *TKL*,

though drawing several ideas from Jainism, affirms only the theory of association. For example, on the matter of death *TKL* observes, “to them that have attained the power of penance, it is possible even to leap over death” (*TKL* 269). Whereas, *NDR* affirms, “man’s days pass not their assigned bound. None here on earth have ever escaped death’s power, made off and got free” (*NDR* 6, Tr. Pope).<sup>7</sup> When *TKL* insists on man’s efforts and environment, *NDR* favours the fruits of one’s *karma*.

### A Few Virtues Illustrated in Other Tamil Didactic Works

The remaining nine works of *Padiṇeṇ Kīlkkāṇakku Nūlgaḷ* (Eighteen (Minor) Literary Works) are less popular as didactic works in Tamil. Each by an individual poet, these works of a lesser repute more or less repeat the same virtues as described in *TKL* and *NDR*. Not structured into chapters, these compositions do not have the verses of similar ideas grouped together. Each poem is to be read to understand the subject of teaching. At times there are repetitions or the same virtue is described differently. Among these didactic works, *Paḷamoli Nāṇūru*, *Nāṇmaṇikkadigai* have some effects on Tamils. *Paḷamoli Nāṇūru*, similar to *NDR* in terms of form and content, is a collection of 400 quatrains by a Jain author called Muṇṇurūrai Araiyaṇār. Each poem ends with a proverb which epitomizes the thought expressed in the earlier three lines. The aesthetic function is performed by the aptness of the proverb in telling idiom, apart from clinching the argument to the satisfaction of the reader. For example, the poet wants to advise people against retaliation or revenge by using a popular proverb. “If worthless people prefer to do some harm, great people would not return the harm even as no man bites the dog in retaliation of its angry bite” (*Paḷamoli Nāṇūru* 49). Thus, the poem conveys the message so effectively to the readers. “As proverbs are more or less proven facts of social reality transmitted

through generation by generation, their use as an illustration of the ideas conveyed readily convinces the reader. The author of this work makes use of this device for a better heuristic function” (Manavalan, *Op.cit.*, p. 243).

The other didactic composition *Nāṇmaṇikkaḍigai* is a short work of 103 verses of *veṇpā* metre authored by Viḷambi Nāgaṇār. The title means ‘the salver of four gems’ and stands to signify that each of its verse contains four statements or aspects of virtue which are somehow associated with each other through antithesis, comparison, or illustration. “In terms of poetic function, it is superior to *Paḷamoḷi Nāṇūru* and many of its statements have passed into the folklore of the Tamils” (*Ibid.*).

The other remaining didactic works such as *Tirikaḍugam*, *Cīrupaṇcamūlam*, *Ēlādi*, *Inṇā Nārpadu* and *Iniyavai Nārpadu* are modelled on *Nāṇmaṇikkaḍigai*. Of these, the first three are named after the number of medicinal ingredients suggested by the name. The *Tirikaḍugam* by Nallādaṇār means ‘composed of three spices namely dry ginger, long pepper and black pepper. Each of the 100 verses makes three statements in the form of instruction.

Acquire wealth in order to give;  
Learn great works that you may walk in the way of virtue;  
Speak every word with gracious purpose;  
These are the paths that conduct not to the world of darkness  
(*Tirikaḍugam* 90, Tr. Pope)<sup>8</sup>

*Cīrupaṇcamūlam* – a composition of 100 verses means ‘concoction of five herbs’. Each verse contains five statements. *Ēlādi* which means ‘compounded six medicinal things, as such contains five or six virtues in each verse. “The idea behind such titles is that just as these ingredients help maintain the body in good health, the virtues described in these works help man develop and maintain a healthy and ethical behaviour in life” (Manavalan,

*Op.cit.*, p. 244). It emphatically lists out some of the virtues which could lead a man to the meaningful life.

Good it is not killing; evil it is killing;  
 Bad it is not learning; harmful it is angry;  
 Good it is not slandering a person before others.  
 (*Ārpaṇcamūlam* 51)

*Iṇṇā Nārpadu* and *Iṇiyavai Nārpadu* are two companion verses of 40 stanzas each, making statements about the desirables and undesirables in life. As such, they represent very wise observations on life and many of them expressed in arresting idioms. Let us see the statement of *Iṇṇā Nārpadu* and *Iṇiyavai Nārpadu* on desirable and undesirable things:

Difficult it is, leading a conjugal life with non-compatible wife;  
 Harmful it is, having friendship with narrow minded  
 (low class) people;  
 Harmful it is, having relationship with womanizers;  
 Distress it is, seeing a creditor getting into the house.  
 (*Iṇṇā Nārpadu* 12)

Pleasant it is, to have the honour of not desiring another's wife;  
 Good it is, the withering crops having the rain;  
 Pleasant it is, the brave king hearing the rut elephant's roaring  
 at his backyard  
 (*Iṇiyavai Nārpadu* 16)

*Ācārakkōvai* (*ĀK*) containing 100 *Veṇpās* of unequal length is more spiritual in aim and much ritualistic in tone. Meaning 'the garland of right conduct', its main concern is to teach good manners and virtuous conduct to man in life both at home and in society. It is not only a collection of moral exhortations but also of ritual observations and customs considered proper and correct. As such, it prescribes daily routine and practical hints to be

followed in life. For example, “those who care for proper manners do not eat before providing it to the guests, elders, cows, slaves and children” (*ĀK* 21)<sup>9</sup>.

*Mudumolikkāñci*, another didactic work of this group, consists of 100 lines in all, divided into ten equal sections. In each line of four feet, an ethical instruction is imparted with internal rhyme and alliteration, facilitating easy memorization. The tone of instruction can be heard in the following lines. “Not a wife she is, who is not leading a life according to the nature of the husband; not life it is, which is not honoured by the wife” (*Mudumolikkāñci*, *Alla Pattu* 1 & 2).

The lesser known didactic works discussed above generally reveal a gradual change of worldview, change of emphasis on certain virtues and inclusion of several new virtues to accommodate the slowly changing phase of the then contemporary society. With one or two exceptions, all the didactic works deal with the virtues such as good birth, domestic life, learning, alms-giving/hospitality, association of good people, abstaining from drinking alcohol and meat-eating and upright government.

“Thematically speaking, the heyday of Tamil didactic literature remains to be the period of the great *Kīlkkāṇakku* works. They had a far greater vision of human merits and demerits: the role of human beings on earth, the true meaning of human life and the essentials and non-essentials of our earthly life. Though there seems to have been a tension between, a poetic pull and the worldviews, life-affirmation and life-negation – their relative merits were never forgotten and their complementary nature never lost sight of. Though some minor works have leaned at times this way or that way, great works like *Kuraḷ*, *Nāḷaiyār*, *Nāṇmaṇikkaṭigai*, and *Nītiṇēri Viḷakkam* did not succumb to these philosophical pulls, but steered ahead with their eyes fixed on the common human nature and nurture. And hence their emphasis is on life rather than on the particular and consequently their

conditioned relevance even to modern times” (Manavalan, *Ibid.*, pp. 250-51).

The Eighteen Didactic Works are not only known for their themes but they are also known for their peculiar verse form, metre called ‘*veṇṇpā*’. When poets like Tiruvalluvar desired to convey the message of virtues to mankind, for that they have carefully chosen this particular metre, which is eminently suitable to gnomic poetry. The *veṇṇpā* is the most difficult and most highly esteemed stanza structure of classical Tamil literature. There are five kinds of *veṇṇpā* stanzas.<sup>10</sup> Tiruvalluvar just skillfully employs a kind of *veṇṇpā* known as *kural veṇṇpā* (The shortest *veṇṇpā*) in his *magnum opus*.

The structural properties of *veṇṇpā* are as follows:

- (a) Only feet of three or two metrical units may be employed.
- (b) The stanza must always end in a foot of the following type: *Nāl*, *Malar*, *Kāsu*, *Pirappu*.<sup>11</sup>
- (c) Strict rules of consonance of lines must be observed (so called *veṇ toḍai*).
- (d) The numbers of lines are two in the case of *kural veṇṇpā*; three in the case of *cindiyal veṇṇpā*; four in the cases of *nērisai veṇṇpā* and *iṇṇisai veṇṇpā*; from five to twelve lines in the case of *pahroḍai veṇṇpā*.
- (e) The last line consists of three feet only. Remaining line(s) each consist(s) of four feet.

As an instance, let us see the structural properties of *kural veṇṇpā* (393) as analyzed by Kamil Zvelebil in his brilliant research book entitled “**Smile of Murugan**” (1973: 166-67) for understanding them properly.

*kaṇṇuḍaiya reṇbavar karrār mugattiraṇḍu*  
*punṇuḍaiyar kallā davar* (TKL 393)



The learned men alone are said to have eyes:  
 The unlearned have but a pair of sores in their face.  
 Its metric structure is:

*Nāl+Malar+Nāl / Nāl+Malar / Nāl+Nāl / Malar+Malar+Nāl*  
*Nāl+Malar+Nāl / Nāl+Nāl / Malar.*

Observe here, how the above-said rules are strictly adhered to as the couplet has four feet in the first line, three feet in the second line. The feet are of two or three metric units only. The couplet ends with a foot of the so-called ‘malar’ shape. Observe, too, how closely and intimately the formal properties and the content are connected. It is precisely this perfect form which – apart from this structural properties and the structural meaning adds to the sometime rather banal sounding ‘sayings’ the ‘beauty and force’ these couplets undoubtedly possess in the original (Kamil Zvelebil 1973: 167).

When poets composed the verses of didactic spirit meant for social righteousness by making individuals morally perfect, they intently chose the small form of poetical metre. Since all these verses have to be recited or quoted again and again whenever necessary even in our modern times only through memory, it was quite natural and just handy for the poets to use this particular *veṇṇpā* metre, which proved them right even after nearly two millennia.

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## Notes

- \* This essay is the slightly revised version of my article entitled  
**“Didactic Literature in Tamil: A Genre for Social Cause”**

published in “**MAJOR GENRES AND TRENDS IN DRAVIDIAN LITERATURE (CLASSICAL)**”, Prof. R. Sri Hari (General Editor), Dravidian University, Kuppam – 517 425, 2003, pp. 151-64.

1. Source: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/didactic>  
Accessed on 29.04.2016
2. *arumporuḷ vēṭkaiyiṇ uḷḷam turappap  
pirintuṛai cūḷādi aiya virumbinī  
eṇtōḷ eḷudiya toyvilum yāḷaniṇ  
mainduḍai mārbil cuṇaṅgum niṇaittuk kāṇ  
ceṇrōr mugappap poruḷum kiḍavādu  
oḷindavar ellārum uṇṇādum cellār  
iḷamaiyum kāmamum ōrāṅgup perrār  
vaḷamai viḷaitakkadu uṇḍō uḷanāl  
orōokai tammuḷ taḷī orōokai  
onṛaṇ kūrāḍai uḍuppavarē āyiṇum  
onṛiṇār vāḷkkaiyē vāḷkkai aridarō  
ceṇra iḷamai tararḱu! (Kalittogai 18)*

Sir, do not consider leaving her, goaded by your mind, and thirsting for precious wealth!

Think about the *thoyyil* designs that you painted on her arms lovingly, and the pallor spots she got embracing your mighty chest.

Wealth does not lie around for those those who go in search of it. Also, those who do not leave to earn wealth do not starve.

Will those with youth and love for each other seek material wealth? Living life is living with love, embracing each other and tearing and sharing garments. It is not possible to bring back youth that would be lost!

(*Kalittogai* 18, Tr.: Vaidehi Herbert)

Source: <https://sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.com/ettuthokai-kalithokai-palai-1-36/>

Accessed on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2016.

3. *nīyē puraviṇ allalaṇriyum pīravum  
iḍukkaṇ palavum viḍuttōṇ marugaṇai*

*ivarē pulanūlu duṇmār puṇkaṇaṇcit*  
*tamadupagut tuṇṇum taṇṇiḷal vāḷnar*  
*kaḷirukaṇ ḍaḷūum aḷāal maranda*  
*puntalaic ciṛāar maṇṇumarunḍu nōkki*  
*virundiṛ puṇkaṇō vuḍaiyar*  
*kēṭṭaṇai yāyiṇī vēṭṭadu ceymmē.*  
 (Kōvūr Kilār to Kiḷḷi Vaḷavaṇ, *Puṇanāṇūru* 46)

You come from the line of Cōḷa king  
 who gave his flesh  
 for a pigeon in danger,  
 and for others besides,

and these children also come  
 from a line of kings  
 who in their cool shade  
 share all they have

lest poets,  
 those tillers of nothing  
 but wisdom,  
 should suffer hardships.

Look at these children,  
 the crowns of their heads are still soft.

As they watch the elephants,  
 they even forget to cry,

stare dumbstruck at the crowd  
 in some new terror  
 of things unknown.

Now that you've heard me out,  
 do what you will.

(Kōvūr Kilār to Kiḷḷi Vaḷavaṇ, *Puṇanāṇūru* 46,  
 Tr.: A.K. Ramanujan, 1985: 122)

4. *Veṇpā* literally means 'the white metre of prosody', (*veṇ* = white, *pā* = metre of prosody). Perhaps it might be 'the serene metre' of Tamil prosody. It is one of the four metres of ancient Tamil prosody. The other three metres of ancient Tamil prosody are: *āciriyaṇṇā*, *vaṇciṇṇā* and *kalippā*. Its 'ōsai' (the rhythmic sound) is 'ceppal'

(telling or discoursing mode). As a form of classical Tamil poetry, *veṇpā* consists of between two and twelve lines.

Vowels and consonant–vowel compounds in Tamil alphabet have been classified into ones with short sounds (*kuṟil*) and the ones with long sounds (*nedil*). A sequence of one or more of these units optionally followed by a consonant can form a *nēr asai* (the Tamil word ‘*asai*’ roughly corresponds to syllable in English) or a *nirai asai* depending on the duration of pronunciation. *Nēr* and *nirai* are the basic units of meter in Tamil prosody. A *cīr* is a type of metrical foot that roughly corresponds to an iamb in English. *Taḷai* is the juxtaposition of iambic patterns.

Note that the official terms for the different ‘*asais*’ are self-descriptive. For example, the word ‘*nēr*’ is itself classified as ‘*nēr asai*’. And the word ‘*nirai*’ is a ‘*nirai asai*’.

A set of well-defined metric rules define the grammar for *veṇpā*. One set of rules constrains the duration of sound for each word or *cīr*, while another set of rules defines the rules for the possible sounds at the beginning of a word that follows a given sound at the end of the preceding word. Any *veṇpā* should conform to both these sets of rules.

Following is the set of production rules corresponding to the first set of rules.

<Veṇpā>	→	<Aḍi>	{1-11}	<Īrṛaḍi>
<Aḍi>	→	<Cīr>	<Cīr>	<Cīr> <Cīr>
<Īrṛaḍi>	→	<Cīr>	<Cīr>	<Īrṛuccīr>
<Cīr>	→	<Īrṛasai>		<Mūvasai>
<Īrṛuccīr>	→	<Nāḷ>	<Malar>   <Kāsu>   <Piṟappu>	
<Īrṛacai>	→	<Tēmā>	<Pulimā>   <Karuṇṇam>   <Kūṇṇam>	
<Muvasai>	→	<Tēmāṇkāy>	<Pulimāṇkāy>   <Karuṇṇāṇkāy>   <Kūṇṇāṇkāy>	
<Tēmā>	→	<Nēr>	<Nēr>	
<Pulimā>	→	<Nirai>	<Nēr>	
<Karuṇṇam>	→	<Nirai>	<Nirai>	
<Kūṇṇam>	→	<Nēr>	<Nirai>	
<Tēmāṇkāy>	→	<Nēr>	<Nēr>	<Nēr>
<Pulimāṇkāy>	→	<Nirai>	<Nēr>	<Nēr>

<Karuvilaṅkāy>	→	<Nirai>	<Nirai>	<Nēr>
<Kūvilaṅkāy>	→	<Nēr>	<Nirai>	<Nēr>
<Nāl>	→	<Nēr+Consonant>		
<Malar>	→	<Nirai+Consonant>		
<Kāsu>	→	<Nēr+ Nēr>		
<Piṛappu>	→	<Nirai+Consonant+Nirai>		
<Nēr>	→	<Kuṛil> or <Neḍil>   <Kuṛil/Neḍil> + <Consonant>		
<Nirai>	→	< 2 Kuṛils> or <Kuṛil+Neḍil>   <2 Kuṛils+Consonant> or <Kuṛil+Neḍil+Consonant>		
<Kuṛil>	=	Short Vowel (a, i, u, e, o)		
<Neḍil>	=	Long Vowel (ā, ī, ū, ē, ō) and Diphthongs (ai, au)		

5. Eleven Didactic Works: 1. *Tirukkuraḷ*, 2. *Nālaḍiyār*, 3. *Paḷamoli Nāṇūru*, 4. *Nāṇmaṇikkadigai*, 5. *Tirikaḍugam*, 6. *Cīrupaṅcamūlam*, 7. *Ācārakkōvai*, 8. *Ēlādi*, 9. *Inṇā Nārpadu*, 10. *Iniyavai Nārpadu*, 11. *Mudumolikkāñci*.
6. Seven Non-Didactic Works: 1. *Kār Nārpadu*, 2. *Kaḷavaḷi Nārpadu*, 3. *Tiṇaimoli Aimpadu*, 4. *Aintiṇai Aimpadu*, 5. *Aintiṇai Eḷupadu*, 6. *Tiṇaimālai Nūrraimpadu*, 7. *Kainnilai*.
7. *Nālaḍiyār* verse 6, Tr. Pope, Quoted in *Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature*, Vol. I, Dr. Shu Hikosaka (Pub.), Institute of Asian Studies, Chennai, 1990, p. 243.
8. *Tirikaḍugam* 90, Tr. Pope, *Ibid.*, p. 244.
9. For more details please see the third chapter entitled “**Sleeping to Salvation: Vedic Codes and Practices**”.
10. Five kinds of *Veṇpā*: 1) *Kuraḷ Veṇpā*, 2) *Nērisai Veṇpā*, 3) *Inṇisai Veṇpā*, 4) *Cindiyal Veṇpā*, 5) *Pahroḍai (Paltoḍai) Veṇpā*.
11. *Nāl*: (*Nēr Asai*) – a foot consists of a short vowel or a long vowel + a consonant)

*Malar*: (*Nirai Asai*) – a foot consists of a pair of short vowels with or without a consonant)

*Kāsu*: (*Nērbu Asai*) – a foot consists of a short or long vowel with or without a consonant + a short vowel consonant ending with ‘vu’.

*Piṛappu*: (*Niraibu Asai*) – a foot consists of a pair of short vowels with or without a consonant + a short vowel consonant ending with ‘vu’.

## Chapter – Two

### Familiar Terms and Unfamiliar Connotations: Cultural Undertones in *Tirukkuraḷ*\*

Every language does have two categories viz. ‘spoken language’ and ‘written’ or ‘literary language’. No language functions without ‘sounds’ or ‘phonemes’, ‘words’ or ‘terms’ and ‘sentences’. A ‘term’ could be merely a sound or a syllable, or a unit of sounds or syllables. All the terms mostly do denote something or the other. Some terms could signify the grammatical tradition while some others the cultural aspects of a given language within its historical evolution. Furthermore, some terms may even denote the culture of an ethnicity, either explicitly or implicitly. Some unique terms such as *cāṇṟōr* (noble men), *nōkku* (sight of love), *naṭpu* (love *i.e.* the sexual relationship), *virundu* (novelty), *nanṟi* (good deed), and *nāṟṟam* (fragrance) as rendered in the classical Sangam works and the post-Sangam works like *Tirukkuraḷ* have acquired different connotations in the Tamil texts, spanning a period of over 2000 years. These terms do effectively reflect the socio-political-religious-cultural life of the Tamils of the preceding eras. As such, they signify the cultural mobility of the Tamils, an ethnicity of the ‘Heroic Age’ (c. 3000 B.C.–A.D. 300). For instance, the unique term *cāṇṟōr* which specifically meant ‘the warriors’ in the Sangam age, however, referred to ‘noble men’/‘men of virtue’ in the *Tirukkuraḷ* period

(c. 200 A.D.), ‘courageous men’ or ‘men of justice’ in the *Cilappadigāram* (c. 250 A.D.), ‘the slaves of the lord’ (*Nāyaṇmārs* and *Ālvārs*) during the Bhakti Movement (c. 600–900 A.D.), ‘prodigious Sangam poets’ in the *Kamba Rāmāyaṇam* (c. 1200 A.D.), and ‘the distinguished’/‘dignified men of holding some eminent and prominent position’ in the present Tamil society. Apparently, several reasons did operate in the evolution of numerous meanings of the terms mentioned above. In the quest for understanding the cultural dynamics of the Tamils, the present essay aims at divulging the cultural undertones of the aforesaid terms in *Tirukkuraḷ* (TKL) in detail.

### Culture – Cultural Mobility

Man is a social being. The manner/conduct/behaviour of one’s ‘inner-self’ (heart) may be termed as ‘culture’. The actions of man’s ‘outer-self’ (body/physique) may be known as ‘civilization’. No one’s/no ethnicity’s culture and civilization remain intact forever. They change/fluctuate according to the demand of situations. A person who acts in certain manner at a particular time will have changes in her/his conduct of the inner and outer-selves. The socio-political-economic-religious conditions of a given period do act as factors on behind her/his culture and civilization. The vicissitudes and fluctuations that influence the inner and outer-selves of a person/an ethnicity can be termed as ‘cultural mobility’.

### Tirukkuraḷ: Age and Matters

As stated in the previous chapter, **Tirukkuraḷ** (c. A.D. 200–250) is composed by Tiruvaḷḷuvar in the post-Sangam period. It is the only ‘Maxims of Truth’ in Tamil which diligently discourses on each and everything, all sorts of virtues and high ideals pertained to whole humanity. Besides imparting indispensable political

knowledge and ethical codes and conducts to rulers as well as citizens, the universally acclaimed didactic treatise aesthetically essayed human beings' nuanced feelings called 'love'. (For more details on *Tirukkural*, please see the passages under the heading **“Tirukkural: The Embodiment of Ancient Tamils' Ethics”** in the previous chapter).

Evidently, at the hind of 'Heroic Age' (c. 3000 B.C.–A.D. 300), the life of valour has seen losing its sheen. This was the age in which the Kings ruled their countries despotically with the enormous powers. Jainism and the Buddhism were having a hold on people by propagating the ideals of world negation and upholding the life of renunciation. People then started to deviate from the tenets of compassion–dignity–discipline. They were bound by evil practices such as lying, stealing, passion, greed, anger, cunning and lust for other's wife *etc.* Also they became addicted to evil habits such as boozing (drinking toddy/liquor) and gambling. So obsessed with accumulating wealth, people started deviating from the path of righteousness, honesty and probity. The Tamil society of bygone era was underway moving away from its cherished principles for the first time in history. In this degenerated scenario, there emerged the great *Tirukkural*. It has emphasized the need for upholding the life of virtue/ righteousness in inner and outer spheres at individual–familial–societal levels. So, 'the Great Maxim' has often employed the unique term *cāṇṛōṇ* at several places so as to emphasize the great dividends one can reap by leading a virtuous life.

## I

### **‘Cāṇṛōṇ’: Learned/Noble Man**

*Cāṇṛōṇ* is a unique literary term in Tamil that has been occurring time and again with different connotations right from the Sangam poems to the contemporary Tamil literature. It is a noun exclusively



referring to the masculine gender singular (Plural. *cāṇrōr/cāṇra-var*). The term normally denotes a ‘scholar’ (*ariṇaṇ*), ‘learned’ (*karrōṇ*), ‘great man’ (*periyōṇ*), (Kathiraiver Pillai 1984: 620), ‘man of noble qualities’ (*narpaṇbu niṛaindavaṇ*), (Varadarajanar 1974: 14). The actual meaning of the term *cāṇrōṇ/cāṇrōr* is *cāṇrāṇmai* (sublimity/virtue/goodness),<sup>1</sup> the men of *cālbukkuṇaṅgaḷ*<sup>2</sup> (the attributes of perfection viz. love, modesty, beneficence, benignant grace and truth), (Pope 2009: 200); *māṭciyir periyōr*<sup>3</sup> (the great personae of glorious traits). *Cāṇrōṇ*, the esteemed person is highly respected by everybody as ‘a great man’ mostly by his high knowledge and fine character. The term strikingly refers to ‘an exceptional warrior’, ‘a great man’, ‘a noble man’ and ‘an excellent poets of Sangam period’ (Vaiyapuri Pillai 1982: 1397). It suffices to say that the *cāṇrōr* (singular *cāṇrōṇ*) are the people known for excellent characteristics. The notions of the excellent characteristics or attributes of the great persons change from time to time as befitting the prevailing significant culture of the Tamils. The excellent attribute was ‘valour’/‘prowess’ (*vīram* in Tamil) in the Sangam Age. Nonetheless, the same term meant differently to denote the ‘erudite scholarship-wisdom-righteousness’ in the post-Sangam period; ‘impeccable quality of justice’ in *Cilappatikāram* (pronounced *Cilappadigāram*; ‘holiness’/‘divinity’ during the Bhakti Movement days; ‘extraordinary poetic skill of Sangam works’ in the *Kamba Rāmāyaṇam*, and ‘the dignity/eminence and prominence/scholarship in Tamil’ in the present Tamil society.

### **‘Cāṇrōṇ’ in Sangam Works (c. 100 B.C.–A.D. 200): Warrior/Noble Man**

The ancient Tamil society consists of several clans virtually shaped into many kingdoms and empires during the Sangam age. The kings of the ancient period have shown utmost interest in

expanding their kingdoms rather than protecting their own territories. So often countless battles/wars were waged. Hence, there arose a great need for warriors – physically strong and mentally shrewd to protect their land. In fact, ‘the great warriors’, emerging triumphant from battles/wars, were highly respected and regarded. They were suitably felicitated with lavish gifts/awards/honours. Against this backdrop, a woman poet named Poṇmuḍiyār, on assuming household life, enlists her societal duty and that of others in the following *Puraṇāṇūru* (PNU), (Puraṇ Poems Four Hundred) poem.<sup>4</sup> She pronounces,

To bring forth and rear a son is my (foremost) duty.  
 To make him noble (warrior) is the father’s.  
 To make spears for him is the blacksmith’s.  
 To show him good ways is the king’s.

And to bear  
 a bright sword and do battle,  
 to butcher enemy elephants,  
 and come back:

that is the young man’s duty.  
 (PNU 312, Tr. A.K. Ramanujan 1985: 185)  
 (The brackets with parenthesis are added by the author)

This poem echoes the ancient predominant patriarchal point of view. The poetess Poṇmuḍiyār apparently declares that bringing forth and rearing a son is her foremost duty. Her husband’s (*i.e.* the father of her son) is to bring up the child as *cāṇrōṇ*, ‘the warrior’ (not ‘wise’ or ‘noble’ (man) as translated by Kamil Zvelebil, A.K. Ramanujan, and George L Hart respectively cited earlier); blacksmith’s to make spears for him; the king’s to offer him a fitting job in his army; finally the duty of the *kālai* (lit. ‘ox’/‘bull’ which denotes here a ‘valiant youth’) is to come back

home victorious after fighting indomitably with his shining sword, after killing wild elephants at battle field. In the interest of apprehending the exact or contextual meaning of the term *cānrōṇ*, we should take the term *kālai* (appearing in the last stanza) into consideration for proper understanding. The term *kālai* in Tamil refers to a young bull or ox. Here the term is rendered as a signifier for signifying ‘the chivalrous warrior’. If we consider the other interpretations such as a ‘wise (man)’, (Zvelebil 1974: 47), a ‘noble (man)’, (Ramanujan 1985: 185), ‘a noble man’ (Hart 1999: 180) as rendered to the aforesaid term by the eminent scholars, then the actual motif of the poem will be paradoxical. Why because, the protagonist of the poem is undoubtedly ‘the chivalrous warrior’. Only to a ‘valiant hero’, a blacksmith is expected to make spears, the king is supposed to offer a suitable position in his army, and finally who returns triumphantly from the battle-field after eliminating the wild elephants can only be called as ‘*kālai*’, a youthful bull.

Any woman naturally should have numerous duties to perform in her familial life. But conspicuously, ‘rearing a warrior/gallant/valiant/chivalrous son seems to be ‘the foremost duty’ of the women of Sangam period’. During that period, a father was expected to facilitate his son to become ‘a warrior youth but not a wise or noble man’. The duties of blacksmith, king and finally the youth enlisted in the poem did contextually corroborate the fact of making a youth as warrior. This can be testified and substantiated by a poem, appearing from the same anthology *Puraṇāṇūru*<sup>5</sup>, penned by a poetess named Kāvaṛpeṇḍu. A young girl, out of some interest in a youth, enquires from his mother about her son’s whereabouts. Then the mother replies with great pride,

You stand against the pillar  
of my hut and ask:  
Where is your son?

I don't really know.  
This womb was once  
a lair  
for that tiger.

You can see him now  
only on battlefields.

(PNU 86, Tr. A.K. Ramanujan 1985: 184)

It is quite evident from the Tamil poem as well as from its English rendering that one can understand the proud sentiment of the mothers who were hugely delighted at the heroic/gallant/valiant personality of their sons. The mothers, as shown in the Sangam poems, indeed, feel proud in rearing a heroic son. The 'mother sentiment' does not show any affection or lenience to cowardly sons, even by whisper. An old woman in *Puṛaṇāṇūru* hears a rumour that her son has died showing his back in the battle field. She instantly becomes enraged and thunders, "if does he show his back and run away from ferocious battle, I will cut off these breasts that fed him" ("*maṇḍamark kuḍaindaṇa ṇāyiṇ uṇḍaveṇ/ mulaiyaṛut tiḍuvēṇ yāṇ*"). She turns over every body lying on the blood-soaked battlefield. She finally finds her son who was chopped to pieces, and feels happier than the day she had borne him! (Kāḱkaippāḍiṇiyār Nacceḷḷaiyār, PNU 278). This is the predominant sense attached to men to be brave and heroic.

Contrary to this specific connotation, the term *cāṇṇrōr* is rarely rendered to denote in general 'noble men' in some poems (e.g.: PNU 191).<sup>6</sup> When the heroic excellence was the most adored merit among the characteristics of youths of Sangam age, however, Zvelebil (1973: 17) interprets the term *cāṇṇrōṇ* in quite another way. While elaborating the meaning of the Tamil term *cāṇṇrōr*, he observes: "This (*cāṇṇrōṇ*) is a participle noun derived from the verb stem *cāl*, "to be abundant, full, suitable, filling, great, noble", the noun *cāl* means "fullness, abundance", *cāḷpu*

means “excellence, nobility” (*Ibid*: 18). So in his dictum, it means ‘a complete man/a whole man/a perfect man’. And he adds: “The world exists because noble and cultured men exist; without them the world would vanish in dust” (*Ibid*). He elaborates furthermore: “The ideal of human life was to be achieved in this life; and it was the ideal of a wise man of human proportions and with human qualities. The important fact is that this Tamil wise men, the *cāṇrōṇ* is not an anchorite or a recluse, not an ascetic of any kind and shade, but a man of flesh and blood who should live fully his days of courtship and of married life, of fighting and love-making, rejoicing in the laughter and happiness with his children and friends and fully dedicated to his social and civic duties” (*Ibid*: 17). Well, there is no second opinion that the word *cāṇrōṇ* clearly refers to ‘a noble man’. But we should know that the qualities/interpretations attributed to the word arguably do vary from time to time. Evidently, the period of the Sangam works is the last phase of the Heroic Age. During this period, it is primarily the ‘warriors’ who actually commanded the great respect of king and the then society. It is apparent that the word mostly and specifically referred to ‘warriors’. However, very rarely in the corpus of Sangam poems, the noun *cāṇrōr* refers to ‘noble men’ (in the moral sense) too. A metrical line from one of the poems (191) of *Puranāṇūru* is adjoined with a unit of adjective *koḷgai* (principled) which possibly means the aforesaid qualities.

When someone wonders, “how come the poet Picirāndaiyār does not have grey hair despite full of years!”, then the poet mentions the following reasons: “I am so fortunate that my wife is virtuous; my offspring are full of understanding; my servants do what I wish; the King desists from doing unrighteousness actions and protects his subjects and the place where I live has

full of ‘*āṇṛavindu aḍaṅgiya koḷgaic cāṇrōr*’ (‘the great men principled in their mature wisdom, humility and self-contained’). ”

If you ask me,  
 “You have lived for many years.  
 Why is your hair not grey?”,  
 it is because my wife is virtuous,  
 my children have gone far in learning,  
 my servants do what I wish  
 and my king protects, not doing  
 what should not be done.  
 Also, in my town there are many noble  
 men who are wise and have self-control!  
 (Tr. Vaidehi Herbert)<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the noun phrase “*āṇṛavindu aḍaṅgiya koḷgaic cāṇrōr*” in the aforesaid poem very truly means “the wise men” or “the men of virtues”.

### ‘*Cāṇrōṇ*’ in *Tirukkuraḷ* (c. A.D. 200–250): Learned/Wise/Noble Man

While the mothers of Sangam Age feel proud to have their sons skilled in warfare, the mothers in the post-Sangam period do also have the same sense of pride but for different reason *i.e.* for being ‘sagacious’ or ‘wise’. Let us see, how a mother on bearing a wise son feels proud in the following *Tirukkuraḷ*<sup>8</sup>:

The mother who hears her son called “a wise man” will rejoice more than she did at his birth.  
 (TKL 69, Tr. Drew & Lazarus 1989: 15)

This is the happiest feeling of the mother juxtaposed to that of the mother of Sangam poem (*PNU* 278) stated earlier. Nevertheless, the sons in both instances are yet denoted by the same term *cāṇrōṇ*

but with different connotations (a ‘warrior’ in the Sangam poem but a ‘wise man’ in the *TKL*). Any woman in family life certainly feels immense happy when she bears a child. [It is so, if the offspring (especially the first one) happens to be a male child in Indian context now]. It is observed elsewhere that womanhood becomes full only with motherhood. Woman undergoes unbearable/indescribable ‘labour pain’ while giving birth to a child. Alas! All her horrifying pains vanish at once as she (the mother) just glance at the new born child. This instantly makes her feel exultant. For the mother of post-Sangam period, the most rejoicing moment occurs at hearing her son as a ‘wise man’ (of learned-wisdom-noble qualities) of impeccable qualities. When the bygone society of Tiruvalluvar days started degenerating in individual as well as societal levels, wise men of noble attributes were, indeed needed for its well-being and existence. TVR feels that only education drives the humanity in the path of righteousness. He denotes all those people of righteousness only with the term *cāṇrōr*<sup>9</sup> (*‘aṛam poruḷ kaṇḍār*’, ‘those who know the attributes of virtue and wealth’, *TKL* 141), (*‘āṇra periyār*’, ‘the august men’, *TKL* 694) in his couplets wherever required. According to his opinion, *cāṇrōṇ* is the man who does not indulge in any sort of immoral activity at any situation. Usually no man stomachs his mother starving in hunger. Even in such worst scenario of emotional upset, the author opines, the son should refrain from any action condemned by *cāṇrōr*, ‘the learned people’ (*TKL* 656).

*īṇrāl pacikāṇbāṇ āyinum ceyyarka*  
*cāṇrōr paḷikkum viṇai.* (*TKL* 656)

Here the term *cāṇrōr* connotes contextually ‘the learned’. It is because only education makes people become aware of what is good or bad/right or wrong to progress in their life. Only those people adhering to *dharma* (righteousness/virtue) handle the case

of dispute without prejudice just like *tulākkōl*, ‘the rod of the balancing equal scale’ (*TKL* 118). ‘Only such great people do not lead an immoral life as they are very sensitive to shame. They are very much aware of the truth that adversity and prosperity do happen respectively due to the destiny of good and bad acts’ (*TKL* 115). ‘Only these great men of nobility have the magnanimous manliness of not desiring another man’s wife’ (*TKL* 148). Thus it shows how the term *cāṇrōr* connoted in general a meaning but differently from the Sangam poems as ‘the learned’, ‘the great men, and ‘the noble men’. It is in the same aforesaid sense the term is rendered in all other post-Sangam works including the *Nālaḍiyār*<sup>10</sup> as the shift has taken place in the culture of Tamils due to the excesses of absolute powerful kings.

## II

### ‘Nōkku’: Sight of Love/Gaze > Looking

It is a common feature that all languages have synonyms. Evidently, we can find countless synonyms in Tamil language too. For instance, let us consider the pair of verbs: “*Ī-Tā-Koḍu*” (“Grant-Provide-Give”). Though these terms seem to be denoting the same meaning at surface level yet they have very subtle differences at a deeper level. From the position of a speaker to someone, these terms do actually mean different things. The first term ‘*ī*’ con-textually denotes a “kind of begging or requesting”. Essentially, it is a “plea” from a periphery to a centre. This is the expression of an inferior by age, wealth, class and so on. Whereas, the last term ‘*koḍu*’ vice versa imparts altogether a different meaning. Etymologically expressing “give”, the term becomes a word of “order/command”. The order is the expression of a superior. But juxtaposed to the aforesaid terms, the middle term ‘*tā*’ seemingly means “provide”. This is the expression between equals.



Similarly, three infinitives which are under our discussion are: “*Pār-Kāṇ-Nōkku*”. These verbal roots may be translated in English as “*See-View-Look*”. Consequently, they become as verbs denoting actions such as “*pārttal* (seeing) – *kāṇal/kāṇudal* (viewing) – *nōkkal/nōkkudal* (looking/gazing)”. Evidently, there exist subtle differences among the meanings of these words. While seeing anything ordinarily without seriousness is denoted by the term *pārttal* (seeing), viewing something/someone consciously with interest is *kāṇal/kāṇudal* (viewing) but looking at the same with deep involvement is *nōkkal/nōkkudal* (looking/gazing). Of *pār-kāṇ-nōkku* terms, the first two are rendered exclusively as verbs, whereas the last one both as verb and noun but in different contexts.

Observing someone or something with deep interest and involvement is known as *nōkku/nōkkal/nōkkudal* (look/looking). But actually the prevailing meaning seems to have derived from the term *nōkku/nōkkam* (sight of love/gaze) rendered in several poems of classical Tamil works. Needless to say, “the sight of love” holds both the lover and the beloved so closely, as they fall in love and mutually become interested in each other with true fondness. Thus, in the sense of sight of love/gaze, the term *nōkku* has been rendered in several Sangam poems and *Tirukkural* couplets<sup>11</sup> (except *TKL* 1047).

We can grasp its connotation also with the phrase of “*pēdai maḍanōkkam*”, ‘the meek looks of innocent girl’ rendered even in *Paripāḍal* (Kunṛam Bhūḍaṇār, *PPL* 9: 48), an anthology of hymns. Since pre-historic times, usually, men fall in love with women. They tend ‘to gaze’ or ‘to look’ at their angels with deep involvement. Obviously, true to their natural attributes viz. meekness, shyness and modesty, women do not respond instantly to the looking/gazing of men. Even if they have a liking, they would often hesitate ‘looking’ or ‘gazing’ at their beloveds directly.

Further, they also tend to dither away in conveying their love openly to their respective men. Let us see here, how this delicate nature of women is aesthetically portrayed in the following *Tirukkuraḷ* couplet.

*yāṇ nōkkuṇkāḷ nilaṇōkkum nōkkākkāl*  
*tāṇōkki mella nagum. (TKL 1094)*

I look; she droops to earth awhile  
 I turn; she looks with gentle smile.  
 (Tr. Shuddhananda Bharati 2008: 224)

This is a couplet expressed/essayed through the hero. We could see, how the unique term *nōkku* (the sight of love/gaze) is employed four times (in the couplet of seven metrical units) conveying the body languages of the hero and his sweetheart. When he looks/gazes/throw intense sight of love (*nōkku*) at her, true to her shyness/modesty she casts her look to the earth. When he does not, she gazes/looks/throw intense sight of love at him with docile and smiles gently. Usually, man has no qualm to look passionately at the girl/lady of his liking whereas woman is prevailed by her psyche.

Having fallen in love with a girl and bewitched by the beauty of her eyes, a hero feels love-sick. Subsequently, he gets puzzled over her ‘intense sight of love’ (*nōkku*) tossed by her eyes which slay him as the god of death can do with sharp tool; yet, at the same time, her eyes become sheepish and docile as doe does, out of shyness. In order to denote ‘the slaying, mobile, and docile nature’ of the eyes of women who is possessed of love feelings – the following couplet aesthetically essays the piercing yet timid looks of the girl in the following manner.

*kūṛamō kaṇṇō piṇaiyō maḍavaral*  
*nōkkamim mūṇru muḍaittu. (TKL 1085)*

Is it Yama, (a pair of) eyes or a hind? – Are not  
all these three in the looks of this maid?  
(Tr. Drew & Lazarus 1989: 219)

It is true that the men who fall in love feel sick due to the penetrating eyes of their sweethearts. And they get cured by the same eyes that soothe the pain subsequently. Thus, their *nōkku*, ‘the gaze/sight of love’ creates sickness of passion in the beginning, inflicts ache in the psyche of men but sooner or later itself turns as medicine curing the illness. This dual role of the passionate look of a girl’s eyes is thus seemingly termed with the word *nōkku* thrice in the following couplet.

*irunōkku ivaḷuṅkaṇ uḷḷadu orunōkku*  
*nōynōk koṇṇannōy marundu.* (TKL 1091)

There are two looks in the dyed eyes of this (fair one),  
one causes pain, and the other is the cure thereof.  
(Tr. Drew & Lazarus 1989: 221)

Another hero has become bewitched by the captivating beauty of one heroine. He gazed/intensely looked at her for quite some time. To his surprise, the charming, voluptuous damsel has responded to his “looking” more passionately than his. Though she is alone yet she appears that she has come with a battalion of army to strike him. We could notice that (the intense passionate) “looks/gazes” of the couple are denoted with the same term *nōkku* thrice in the following couplet.

*nōkkiṇāṇ ṇōkkedir nōkkudal tākkaṇaṅgu*  
*tāṇaik koṇḍaṇṇa duḍaittu.* (TKL 1082)

This female beauty returning my looks is like  
a celestial maiden coming with an army to contend against me.  
(Tr. Drew & Lazarus 1989: 219)

When the eyes of lovelorn couple become “looked”/“gazed”, locked with each other, the words of their mouths are of no use. Here in the following couplet too the intense love-look is again denoted with the term *nōkku*.

*kaṇṇoḍu kaṇṇiṇai nōkkokkiṇ vāyccorkaḷ*  
*eṇṇa payaṇu mila. (TKL 1100)*

The words of mouth are of no use  
 When eye to eye agrees the gaze.  
 (Tr. Shuddhananda Bharati 2008: 225)

Kambaṇ, the prodigious Tamil poet, has employed intact these two catchy words “*kaṇṇoḍu kaṇṇiṇai*” in his great epic *Kamba Rāmāyaṇam*. These two terms appearing in a poem have become so popular in Tamil literary discourses even now-a-days. As we know, Vālmīki has not portrayed Rāma and Sīta as known to each other before the event of the ‘breaking of bow’. But Kambaṇ has crafted a little change in the sequence of events so fittingly only to adhere to the ancient Tamil *akam* tradition. It may be mentioned here that Tolkāppiyar (300–100 B.C.), the earliest Tamil grammarian, has outlined the features of Tamil love convention in his grammatical work *Tolkāppiyam*. He outlines, ‘by the command of God, a man (the lover) and woman (lady-love) being equal in status meet together and get married after their courtship’ (*Tolkāppiyam*, *Kaḷaviyal* 2, Cf. Ilakkuvanar 1963: 175); ‘solemnizing their courtship is said to be that the ‘would-be husband’ will have his ‘would-be-wife’ being given by those who are legally entitled to do so with the usual ceremony. Their marriage will take place even without the givers when they (bridegroom and bride) resort to elopement’ (*Tolkāppiyam*, *Kaṇṇiyal* 1–2, Cf. Ilakkuvanar 1963: 189). So accordingly Kambaṇ has depicted a situation where Rāma and Sīta see each other and fall in love before the event of ‘breaking the bow’. Seer Vishvāmitra along with Rāma and Lak-

shmaṇa enter Mithila city. While proceeding to the royal place of king Janaka, incidentally, Rāma looked up at the balcony of the palace where Sīta was standing. She did too look at him simultaneously. Instantly their eyes met and mingled. He gazed/glanced (*nōkku*) at her; She too did gaze/glance at him. They exchanged their glances. And at the very moment their hearts were united too. Love cropped up immediately in no time. Let us see, how the poet sketches the scene so vividly here.

*eṇṇaru nalattiṇāḷ iṇaiyaḷ niṇruḷi  
kaṇṇoḍu kaṇṇiṇaik kavvi onṇaiyonru  
uṇṇavum nilaipeṇādu uṇarvum onṇiḍa  
aṇṇalum nōkkiṇāṇ avaḷum nōkkiṇāḷ.  
(Kamba Rāmāyaṇam Bāla Kāṇḍam,  
Midilaikkāṭcip Paḍalam 35)*

As unimaginable beauty (Sīta) thus standing,  
the two pairs of eyes devouring each other;  
they delighted in eating each other; their awareness unsettled,  
the lord looked; she too looked.

(Tr. Prof. Vanathu Antoni rendered on 17<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2014)

Since the day Kambaṇ presented his magnum opus to a learned assembly for its approval, the above quoted word-picture has been ruling the roost in Tamil literary stages as well as ordinary conversations. Kambaṇ eulogizes the loving looks of Rāma and Sīta. Rāma's eyes fell on Sīta and hers on him. "Their minds merged and their feelings mingled", says Vai. Mu. Gopala Krishnamachariyar (*Śrī Kamba Rāmāyaṇam, Bāla Kāṇḍam*, 1965: 449). The explanation of the pen-picture (word-picture) goes thus. "As Sīta with unimaginable beauty stood thus, their eyes devoured each other. They delighted in eating each other. Their awareness was unsettled and their hearts mingled. Rāma cast his deep loving

look on Sīta. Simultaneously she too cast her deep loving look on him.”

Thus, the term *nōkku*, originally connoted in the sense of ‘the intense sight of love’ in *Tirukkuraḷ* (c. 250 A.D.) did sail (in the same meaning) up to the period of *Kamba Rāmāyaṇam* (c. 1200 A.D.) for one millennium years. It is heartening to know that Kambaṇ has upheld the ancient Tamil love convention so intact even after centuries and narrated it so vividly. He has placed the highly evolved literary tradition so fittingly in his immortal epic for its poise and grace. It is only after the age of *Kamba Rāmāyaṇam*, the term *nōkku* seems to have evolved the meaning of ‘observing’/‘looking’ at something/someone seriously or with deep involvement. Thus, the term becomes a tool to proclaim an ancient Tamil literary love convention.

### III

#### ‘Naṭpu’: Love (the Sexual Relationship) > (Usual) Friendship

Another unique term being rendered since Sangam poems till date post-modern Tamil writings is *naṭpu*. It is commonly used at present to denote “the normal” or “close friendship” between people of same the sex (*i.e.* between male and male or female and female) irrespective of age, profession, status, caste, creed *etc.* But the term had been rendered specifically to refer to *kādal*, “the emotion of love”/“the sexual relationship” prevailing among the opposite sexes *i.e.* between adults or matured male and female in the *akam* poems of Sangam classics.

The term *naṭpu* which is the derivative of *naṇbu* indeed means ‘friendship’. The Tamil word *naṇbaṇ* (*naṇbu*+*aṇ*, a suffix for singular masculine gender) denoting a male ‘friend’ is, actually, derived from the aforesaid noun. It is similar to the term *aṇbu* (affection) + *aṇ* that becomes *aṇbaṇ* (well-wisher or friend).

It is interesting to know that the term ‘*naṇbu*’ denotes “the romantic relationship of hero and heroine” (“love”) in *akam* (interior feelings) poems whereas the same had been referring to “friendship” of males in *puram* (heroic/exterior actions) poems. For instance, the following *Akanāṇūru* poem shows how the term *naṇbu* is rendered in the sense of ‘romantic relationship’ that usually exists between man and woman.

....       ....       ....       ....  
*uravuppeyal poḷinda naḷḷeṇ yāmattu*  
*araviṇ paintalai iḍarip pāṇāḷ*  
*iraviṇ vandem iḍaimulai muyaṅgit*  
*tuṇikaṇ agala vaḷaiik kaṅguliṇ*  
*iṇidiṇ iyaiṇda naṇbavar (lover) muṇidal*  
*terrā gudalnar karindaṇa māyiṇ*  
*ilaṅguvaḷai ṇeḡiḷap parandupaḍar alaippayām*  
*muyaṅgutorum muyaṅgutorum uyaṅga mugandukoṇḍu*  
*aḍakkuvam maṇṇō tōḷi ...*  
 ....       ....       ....       ....  
*cāral nāḍaṇ cāyal mārbē!*  
 (Maduraip Paṇḍavāṇigaṇ Iḷandēvaṇār, *Akanāṇūru* 328)  
 (The parenthesis is added by the author)

We could perceive the specific meaning of the term *naṇbu* in the following English rendering:

It has become clear, the hatred  
 of the one who came in the middle  
 of the night and hugged me sweetly  
 with deep friendship (love), for my sorrow  
 to leave, in the mountain range with  
*surapuṇṇai* trees, where clouds rise  
 up with strength, and roar loudly  
 like drums of drummers, attack the  
 heads of snakes, and come down as  
 heavy rains.

Whenever my bright bangles slipped  
 and sorrow spread, did I not embrace  
 him and embrace him, and contain  
 him, my friend,  
 the handsome chest of the man from  
 .....  
 mountain with banana trees?  
 (Tr. Vaidehi Herbert)<sup>12</sup>  
 (The parenthesis is added by the author)

The hero has been “seeing” his ladylove secretly and frequently for several days during the nightfall at monsoon season in mountain region. In rainy season, the clouds rise up with vigour, and roar loudly like beaten drums, so it eventually pours. These sudden and incessant thundering sounds of the clouds bang the tender heads of snakes and consequently make them die at the end. Visiting her regularly after being stumbled upon the dead snakes during the heavy rainy season, he has had “the blissful meetings” with her at night times. Nevertheless he abruptly stopped one day seeing her for unknown reasons. Yet the heroine (along with her *tōḷi*) awaits him at the spot where they met earlier in the dead of nights. There upon, she becomes anxious. In this apprehensive milieu, she recalls his earlier “deep emotive relationship” (love) to her girlfriend by referring him as “*naṇbavar*” (lit. “lover he”).

Contrary to this connotation, the term *naṇbu* has been rendered denoting generally the “usual friendship” in *Puraṇānūru*. For example, “*igaḷvilāṇ iṇiyaṇ yātta naṇbiṇaṇ*” (lit. “He never hurts, pleasant man, intimate friend”), (Kōpperuñcōḷaṇ, PNU 216: 6), “*cīrumaṇai vāḷkkaiyiṇ orī varunarkku/ udavi yārru naṇbīr paṇbuḍai/ ūḷir rāgaṇiṇ ceygai*” (lit. “May your actions be friendly to those who come to your home in need”), (Uṇaiyūr Mudukaṇṇaṇ Cāttaṇār, PNU 29: 20-21). Thus, we could see how



the term *naṇbu* on the one hand denotes “love relationship” in *akam* poems while on the other in the sense of “friendship” in the *puṇam* poems.

The aforesaid term had been rendered also in several couplets of *Tirukkuraḷ* with the connotation of “friendship”. For example,

*aṇbīṇum ārvam uḍaimai aduvīṇum*  
*naṇbeṇṇum nāḍāc ciṟappu. (TKL 74)*

Love yields aspiration and thence  
 Friendship springs up in excellence.  
 (Tr. Shuddhananda Bharati 2008: 17)

Here in the *Tirukkuraḷ*, we could understand how the term *naṇbu* (appearing as the first word in the second line) is apparently referring to “friendship”. The couplet pronounces: “Love begets enthusiasm which in turn yields friendship of excellence with everyone especially”. Even to the people of unfriendly nature (*naṇbarrār*), one should be friendly. That is the culture of the noble. Otherwise the discourtesy becomes the blemish whatever be their greatness. This is the message explicitly imparted in the following couplet. So, *naṇbu* (the first word appearing in the first line of the couplet), plainly means “friendship” which is added with the suffix *arrār*, ‘those who lack’.

*naṇbarrā rāgi nayamila ceyvārkkum*  
*paṇparrā rādal kaḍai. (TKL 998)*

In the Tamil vocabulary, there exists a sequence of words as “*tōḷamai* (friendship) – *tōḷaṇ* (male friend) – *tōḷi* (female friend)”. But there exists no such sequence of words in the case of root words like *naṇbu* (friendship) and *aṇbu* (affection) to denote female categories: “*Naṇbu* (friendship) – *naṇbaṇ* (male friend) – *naṇbaḷ/naṇbi* (female friend)”; “*Aṇbu* (affection) – *aṇbaṇ*

(male well-wisher☑) – *aṇbaḷ/aṇbi* (female well-wisher☒). When suffixes such as ‘*aṇ*’ and ‘*ar*’ denoting masculine gender singular and plural respectively adjoin the aforesaid root words (*naṇbu* and *aṇbu*), either ‘*aḷ*’, a suffix or ‘*i*’, a syllable denoting the feminine gender singular, do not for cultural reasons.

In *Kuruntogai* (*KRT*) anthology, a man meets a beautiful lady in the *kuṛiñci* (mountain) tract. He falls in love with her. Ultimately, he desires to take her. However, the woman hesitates out of modesty. Yet, he does not give up hope. Thereafter, he decides to shoo away her shyness by gently touching her body parts. Nevertheless, he becomes captivated by the fragrance of her tresses. So, he enquires from a honey bee as follows: “Oh beautiful winged bee gathering honey from a cluster of flowers! Have you ever come across a most fragrant flower than the sweet-smelled tresses of my ladylove who keeps *naṭpu* (deep love relationship) unceasingly for births with me?”

*koṇgutēr vāḷkkai aṇcīrait tumbi*  
*kāmam ceppādu kaṇḍadu moḷimō*  
*payiliyadu keḷīya naṭpiṇ mayiliyal*  
*ceṇiyeyiṛ rarivai kūndaliṇ*  
*naṇiyavum uḷavō nīyariyum pūvē!*  
 (Iṇiyaṇār, *KRT* 2)

Here in the poem the term *naṭpu* (appearing in the third line) does actually denote ‘the strong emotive relationship’ viz. ‘love’ (the unique feeling and emotive relationship that naturally exists between the opposite sexes) but not in the modern day connotation of “normal relationship”. It is heartening to know that the hero (who makes the poem) underlines his sweetheart’s enduring love of many births as *naṭpu*, ‘the emotional love’. This particular term as well as the poem has been rendered perfectly into English in the following manner.

O beautiful winged bee  
 whose life is choosing honey!  
 Tell me what you found  
 and not what pleases me!  
 Is there a flower with more  
 fragrance than the hair of  
 my woman with perfect teeth,  
 peacock nature and enduring love?  
 (Tr. Vaidehi Herbert)<sup>13</sup>

Also in another poem from the same anthology but put through the mouth of heroine, the term *naṭpu* is again rendered exactly in the same meaning of emotional love that exists between a man and a woman.

*nilattiṇuṁ peridē vāṇiṇuṁ uyarndaṇru*  
*nīriṇuṁ āraḷa viṇṇē cāral*  
*karuṅkōl kuṇṇiṇcip pūkkonḍu*  
*peruntēṇ iḷaikkum nādaṇoḍu naṭpē!*  
 (Dēvakulattār, *KṚT* 3)

The heroine in the aforesaid poem does use the same term *naṭpu* while she is delightfully referring to ‘the bigger, higher and more unfathomable love relationship’ which exists between herself and her man. But she emphasizes her ‘deep emotive relationship’ with the term *naṭpē* (*ē* is a metrical syllable which emphasizes the given word). Let us see, how the term and the poem are rendered so poetically into English here.

Bigger than earth, certainly,  
 higher than the sky,  
 more unfathomable than the waters  
 is this love (*naṭpē!*) for this man  
     of the mountain slopes  
     where bees make rich honey

from the flowers of the *kuriñci*  
 that has such black stalks.  
 (Tr. A.K. Ramanujan 1985: 5),  
 (The parenthesis is added by the author)

The poem opens with large abstractions about her love (Ramanujan 1985: 244). Understandably, her *naṭpu* (enduring intense love) with the man is bigger than earth, higher than sky and deeper than ocean. This is the overwhelming blissful relationship a woman like her can cherish. It is often in the sense of denoting such “everlasting deep sensual love relationship” of man and woman, the aforesaid unique term has been rendered strikingly in several poems of Sangam classics.<sup>14</sup> For example,

*amma vāḷi tōḷi nammoḍu*  
*piriviṇ rāyiṇ naṇṇuman tilla*  
 .... ..  
*vilāṅgumalai nāḍaṇoḍu kalanda naṭpē!*  
 (Kōvēṅgaip Peruṅkadavaṇār, *KṚT* 134)

A heroine fears that her man from mountain region is contemplating to go away from her for some reason. Already she has given herself completely to him and emotionally sunk towards him. So she wishes ‘her deep perpetual intermingled love relationship with the man from mountain region’ (*malai nāḍaṇoḍu kalanda naṭpu*) should not see any set back. That is what she aspires. Only that would be fine for her, she feels. In this poem also, ‘ē’ – a metrical syllable is adjoined to the term *naṭpu* (> *naṭpē*) only to emphasize the enduring love relationship of man and woman. The following metrical lines would testify to the nuances of her enduring love feelings and sentiment.

May you live long, my friend!  
 It would be nice

if there is no parting  
 from this union of love (*kalanda naṭpu*)  
 with the man  
 from the blocking mountains.  
 (Tr. Vaidehi Herbert)<sup>15</sup>  
 (N.B.: The parenthesis is added by the author)

In the following metrical lines, the term *naṭpu* is further stated more vividly and expressed splendidly with a similar term *kādal*. The latter term has replaced the former since centuries, fully usurped its connotation and is being expressed in Tamil literary writings as well as in its ordinary day-to-day language in the sense of ‘long-lasting intermingled love relationship’ found between man and woman. Let us observe, how the following lines describe the delicate difference between the enduring love and passing short-time passion of man and woman.

*uyiriyain daṇṇa naṭpiṇ avvuyir*  
*vāḷdal aṇṇa kādal*  
*cādal aṇṇa pirivaṛi yōlē!*  
 (Naraimuḍi Neṭṭimaiyār, ANU 339: 12-14)

The terms *naṭpu* and *kādal* rendered in the poem are no doubt synonyms but with a subtle difference – denoting the typical emotional relationship of man and woman. Evidently, here ***naṭpu* refers to ‘an everlasting emotional bond’ or ‘soul-mingled relationship’ often found among well-mannered man and woman whereas *kādal* denotes their ‘momentary’/‘short-lived passion’.** We can grasp the subtle difference of these terms in the following stanzas.

Love is to living what beautiful life  
 is to the body. Separation from the  
 precious woman is like death!  
 (Tr. Vaidehi Herbert)<sup>16</sup>

The term *naṭpu* exceptionally in one *Akanāṇūru* poem (195) refers to ‘the umbilical relationship of mother and daughter’ as *maḍanallālai īṇra naṭpu* (the relationship of having given birth to the naïve girl like doe-like looks)<sup>17</sup>. Here, we can understand that their relationship too is emotional and ever-lasting one like that of man and woman. Yet, they are different. The relationship between mother and daughter is genetic, natural and ‘pure affection’ whereas man’s ‘love’ crops up over the latter’s physical and mental beauty and charm.

Well, in the post-Sangam literary works like *Tirukkuraḷ*, the cultural term *naṭpu*<sup>18</sup> has been often rendered with the aforesaid specific connotation. Also the term has become title to two chapters (79 & 80) of *Tirukkuraḷ* namely *Naṭpu* (Friendship), *Naṭpārāydaḷ* (Choice of friends). Strikingly, in one of the couplets, a husband refers to ‘the everlasting emotional bond’ or ‘soul mingled relationship’ of his wife with the term *naṭpu*. The bond is so profound/deep rooted like the inseparable relationship that typically remains between body and soul, thus he speaks.

*uḍamboḍu uyiriḍai eṇṇa maṇṇarra*  
*maḍandaiyoḍu emmiḍai naṭpu.* (TKL 1122)

The author Tiruvalluvar in another couplet under the chapter entitled *Nilaiyāmai* (Instability) also employs exactly the aforesaid analogy. He describes ‘the intimate-inseparable relationship of body and soul’ to the liking of ‘bird and egg-shell’s relationship’. Let us see the couplet with its translation as follow:

*kuḍambai taṇittoḷiyap pulpaṇ darṇē*  
*uḍamboḍu uyiriḍai naṭpu.* (TKL 338)

The soul from body any day  
 Like bird from egg-shell flies away.  
 (Tr. Shuddhananda Bharati 2008: 69).

Contrarily, the term in our discussion, has also been referring to “normal friendship of affection which usually remains between adults of the same sex”.

Friendship (*naṭpu*) hastens help in mishaps  
Like hands picking up dress that slips.  
(TKL 788, Tr. Shuddhananda Bharati 2008: 161)

Friendship (*naṭpu*) is not mere smile on face  
It is the smiling heart’s embrace.  
(TKL 786, Tr. Shuddhananda Bharati 2008: 161)  
(The parentheses are added by the author)

Thus Tiruvaḷḷuvar defines friendship with the term *naṭpu* so profoundly and agreeably to the liking and appreciation of every one regardless of time and place. He affirms that “noble men will remember throughout their seven-fold births the friendship of willing friend who wiped out their tears” (TKL 107).

It is remarkable to show that some nouns such as *keḷutagaimai*<sup>19</sup>, *kēṇmai*<sup>20</sup>, *toḍarbu*<sup>21</sup>, and *toḍargai* (TKL 450), and verbal nouns such as *naṭṭal* (TKL 784 & 791), *paḷagudal* (TKL 785) have also been denoting the meaning of the term *naṭpu*, ‘everlasting inseparable love relationship’. Among these terms, *kēṇmai* has been rendered frequently in the exact meaning of everlasting emotional bond or soul-mingled relationship of well-mannered man and woman in Sangam poems. For example, “*Kuṇṇa nāḍaṇ kēṇmai*” (KRT 38 & 90), “*Malaikeḷu nāḍaṇ kēṇmai*” (KRT 170), “*Sūrmalai nāḍaṇ kēṇmai*” (KRT 105), and “*Poygai ūraṇ kēṇmai*” (KRT 61). While the noun phrases *kuṇṇa nāḍaṇ*, *malaikeḷu nāḍaṇ* and *sūrmalai nāḍaṇ* all refer to lord of mountain, the other noun phrase *poygai ūraṇ* refers to lord of cultivable lands filled with natural ponds. These noun phrases referring to ‘the everlasting deep soul-mingled relationship’ (‘intense love relationship’) of man are stated either by the

heroine or by her girlfriend in those poems. It is imperative that the women personae in *akam* poems had rendered this term exactly in the sense of *naṭpu* ('everlasting inseparable love relationship') as stated earlier.

Though the aforesaid term occurs in a number of *Tirukkuraḷ* couplets yet it is not in the above-mentioned meaning. But it is rendered to denote "the normal caring friendship which usually remains between adults of same the sex". These two terms (*kēṇmai* and *naṭpu*) have been rendered in a few couplets describing the subtle difference which rests between them. We can comprehend the difference or nuance of these words as expressed in the following couplet.

*maṇavaṇka mācaṇṇār kēṇmai tuṇavaṇka*  
*tuṇbattuḷ tuppāyār naṭpu. (TKL 106)*

Forget not the friendship (*kēṇmai*) of pure people.  
 Forsake not the friendship (*naṭpu*) of those –  
 who stood by you in adverse times.

(Translation and parenthesis are done by author)

Though both the terms denote similar meanings yet they are not the same. It may be otherwise stated: "Forgetting friendship of perfect people is not good; forsaking the friendship of people who render timely help is bad". The former would not bring any daunting ill-reputation to the person who forgot the friendship of immaculate people whereas the latter would surely bring a terrible effect to him/her sometimes later. This is what the couplet states explicitly – what one should do in the matter of friendship. Evidently, we could comprehend the slight difference that persists between these two terms. No doubt, *naṭpu* is truly significant than *kēṇmai* though they both denote similar meanings. This same notion is shown in differently in the following couplet. The



couplet says: “Friendship developed with noble and wise men will grow day by day like the waxing moon, whereas the friendship with illiterate fools will diminish day by day like the waning moon” (Vishwanathan 2011: 238).

*nīrainīra nīravar kēṇmai pīṛaimadip  
piṇṇīra pēdaiyār naṭpu. (TKL 782)*

The friendship of the wise waxes like the new moon  
(but) that of fools wanes like the full moon.  
(Tr. Drew & Lazarus 1989: 159).

Needless to say, ‘the friendship’ (*kēṇmai*) of wise men gradually progresses like the new moon only to mature as full moon later. Whereas, ‘the friendship’ (*naṭpu*) of unwise men seemingly full at the beginning slowly fades away later like the full moon dwindles into mere dark shades. Tiruvalluvar thus employs these two terms splendidly in analogy to refer to two kinds of friendship. Apparently, in this couplet of *Tirukkuraḷ*, the author places *naṭpu* at a higher pedestal than *kēṇmai*. The former gradually matures into bloom whereas the latter slowly lessens into gloom. The friendship of wise/learned/upright people usually progresses steadily over a period of time. Thereby, it remains intimate and intact for a long period. Whereas, the friendship of unwise/unlearned/immoral people starts rousing at the beginning but sooner or later that disappears as bubbles.

Though there is no separate Tamil term for denoting ‘a friend’ in *Tirukkuraḷ* yet there are some terms generally referring to ‘friends’ (plural nouns) such as *kēṇmaiyaṛ* (TKL 809), *kēṇmai-yavar* (TKL 807), *kiḷaijñar* (TKL 796), *naṭṭār*<sup>22</sup> in the line of *tōḷar/naṇbar* (male friends). From the evidences we have cited, we may pertinently conclude that **the cultural term *naṭpu* has been**

rendered in several of Sangam poems as well as in a few couplets of *Tirukkuraḷ* specially to denote ‘emotional love union of man and woman’ and yet generally to refer to “normal” or “close friendship” of same the sex.

#### IV

#### ‘Virundu’: Novelty/Newness/Unknown People/ Strangers > Feast

Another exceptional term which affirms the cultural mobility of Tamils is ‘*virundu*’. The real meaning of the term was ‘novelty/newness’ or ‘new or unknown person(s)/stranger(s)’. But, now-a-days the term is being rendered in the sense of ‘feast’ or ‘dinner’. Etymologically, indeed, it means a new variety of food items which supposedly taste afresh for the guests. Since, fresh food items are usually served in social gatherings like *cigai nīkku-kādaṇi viḷā* (tonsure-cum-ear boring function), *upanayana* ceremony (a sanctifying ritual (*samskāra*) of wearing the sacred thread to Brahmin boys mostly at the age of five), *mañcal nīrāṭṭu viḷā/pūppuc caḍaṅgu viḷā* (bathing ceremony of (girl) attaining puberty), *tirumaṇam* (wedding), *etc.*, and festivals like *pongal*, *dīpāvaḷi*, *kārttigai dīpam*, *etc.*, the new food items are denoted with the aforesaid term as *virundu*. This is the common meaning of the term which is in vogue since ages. In this connotation, the term was rendered only in a few poems of Sangam classics. For example, “*virunduṅ ḍāṇāp peruñcōr raṭṭil*” (Kaḍiyālūr Urittiraṇ Kaṇṇaṇār, *Paṭṭiṇappālai*, line 262), (lit. ‘the Guests’) eat the feast unlimited big meal made in kitchen), “*vacaiyil vāṇṭiṇaip puraiyōr kaḍumboḍu/ virunduṅ ḍeñciya miccil peruntagai/ niṇṇoḍu uṇḍalum puraivadu*” (Kabilar, *Kuṛiñcippāṭṭu*, lines 205-07), (lit. “After the wise, rich and relatives have eaten their stomach full, we will eat together the left-over food. A noble one, eating with

you will be special”). The aforesaid stanzas seemingly attest to a fact about the ancient Tamils’ culture wherein fresh food varieties were served to the gatherings on special occasions.

Strikingly, the term *virundu* occurs for the very first time absolutely in the sense of ‘novelty’/‘newness’ in the second part of *Tolkāppiyam* entitled *Colladigāram* (*Kiḷaviyākkam* 56) which deals with etymology, morphology, semantics and syntax. The term again occurs in the third part of the same grammatical work entitled *Poruḷadigāram* (*Ceyyūḷiyal* 231) which mainly deals with poetics. While the grammarian is explaining about the concept called *virundu* in *Ceyyūḷiyal* (Chapter on Composition), he says, “*virundē tāṇum, puduvadu puṇainda yāppiṇ mērrē*” (lit. “*virundu* is the verse which speaks of new ideas in the new way”).

It is in the same connotation of ‘newness’, the term is rendered in several of Sangam poems. For example, “*meliya rallōr virundupūṇa layara*” (“Those who are strong enough advance into the new waters and play”), (Nallanduvaṇār, *PPL* 6: 40). There was rain after the scorching summer days. So, people became ecstatic instantly and some strong people surged towards the river. They started playing in its ‘fresh waters’ and thoroughly enjoyed the sport. Hence, the poet Nallanduvaṇār meaningfully employs the term *virundupūṇal* just to refer to rain water for its ‘newness’.

Feast or special food is also denoted as *virundu* in some poems of Sangam works. A hero frequently sees and takes his ladylove at the usual meeting spot of ‘day-tryst’ (*pagarkuṛi*). His sweetheart wishes that he should marry her soon. So her *tōḷi* asks him to go along with his servants by chariot to the heroine’s home. She tells him to stay at her house as a stranger for some days to relish the good feast. Thereby, their wedding shall be fixed without further delay. See these details, how seemingly are comprehended in the following poem (*ANU* 300).

*ilaiyarum puraviyum iṇbuṛa nīyum*  
*illuṛai nalvirundu ayardal*  
*olludal perumanī nalgudal perinē!*  
 (Ulōccaṇār, ANU 300: 20-22)

With your horses and servants you will be happier  
 by enjoying our ‘good feast’ (*nalvirundu*),  
 if you agree to visit and stay at our house.  
 (Tr. Author)

A hero, as depicted in the aforesaid anthology, is returning home from the battle field after completing the mission successfully. His king’s great rage has ebbed as the ‘new kings’ have given their tributes to him. Sweet rains started falling with loud uproar from the skies. Consequently, he asks his charioteer to drive the chariot fast so that he can see his wife early who awaits him with patience. In the poem (ANU 54), the poet Mārṛūrkiḷār Magaṇār Korraṇkorraṇār has rendered suitably the phrase *virundiṇ maṇṇar* just to refer to the ‘new kings’ as they have not fought with him but accepted his prowess by paying tributes to him. Similarly another hero also returning home after performing his stately duty successfully during the rainy season at evening time. He also urges the charioteer to hasten the chariot only to have blissful union with his wife. So he asks the charioteer,

*celga tērē nalvalam peruna!*  
*peruntōl nuṇugiya nucuppiṇ*  
*tirundiḷai arivai virundedir koḷavē!*  
 (Iḍaikkāḍaṇār, 374: 16-18)

Drive the chariot (speedily), Oh highly skilled charioteer!  
 so that we can have ‘the feast’ (*virundu*)  
 from the young woman with wide shoulders,  
 thin waist and perfect jewels.  
 (Tr. Author)

The phrase *arivai virundu* (*arivai* = woman, *virundu* = feast) appearing in the last line of poem conveys certain unique meanings. One is explicit while the other implicit. Since the hero is returning home after a long time, his wife awaits to treat him with ‘feast’, the just cooked tasty food items. We can infer its suggestive meaning by considering other phrases such as ‘wide shoulders, thin waist and perfect jewels’ of the young woman, the heroine. So these words conspicuously mean that his wife will treat him ‘afresh’ by offering herself as ‘feast’; will entertain him sexually with innovative methods.

In another poem from the same anthology, the term thus appears and conveys similar meaning. In this poem too, the hero is returning home after completing his mission in a chariot. On seeing him hurry in the chariot, some farm labourers whisper saying,

*virundum perugunaḷ pōlum tirundiḷait*  
*taḍameṇ paṇaittōḷ maḍamoḷi arivai*  
 .....  
*cellum neḍuntagai tērē*  
*mullai mālai nagarpuga lāyndē!*  
 (Okkūr Macāttiyār, 324: 1-15)

perhaps, she will get a ‘feast’ (*virundu*) –  
 the woman wearing perfectly made jewels,  
 who is with soft bamboo-like shoulders,  
 and with soft-spoken nature!

.....  
 the chariot of the towering esteemed man  
 going in this *mullai* tract  
 might enter the town at evening time!  
 (Tr. Author)

Here too, the term occurs in the same connotation *i.e.* ‘the blissful sexual union’ but with a difference. Here, the hero becomes ‘the

host' while his wife, 'the guest'. He is about to treat her 'afresh' by entertaining her sexually with vigour. We can understand now, how the term *virundu* means 'feast' etymologically as well as 'something else' symbolically.

It is to be noted that the term is otherwise rendered in the sense of 'new people'/'unknown people'/'strangers' in *Purāṇā-nūru*, an anthology of heroic poems. Once, the Cōla King Kuḷamurrattut Tuṇṇiya Kiḷlivalavaṇ conquers his enemy Malaiyamāṇ in the battle. After eliminating him, he imprisons his little children along with others and brings them to his country only to kill them cruelly. In a public place, where numerous people have gathered, he buries them alive, leaving only their heads above the pits to allow the elephants to trample them under foot. Coming to know about the imminent inhuman action, the poet Kōvūr Kiḷār enters the scene at the right moment to save the innocent children. He counsels the cruel king with courage and conviction. He reminds him of his forefather's unique gesture shown to a pigeon out of compassion. And he brings to his knowledge the benevolent attribute of the children's forefathers too. Further, at the end, he points out the innocent nature of those children. That finally changes the heart of king. We can realize, how the term *virundu* is employed in the poem to denote these children as 'unknown people/strangers'.

*kalirukaṇ ḍaḷum aḷāal maranda*  
*puntalaic ciṛāar manrumaruṇḍu nōkki*  
*virundiṛ punkaṇṇō vuḍaiyar!*  
*kēṭṭaṇai yāyiṇṇī vēṭṭadu ceymmē!*  
 (Kōvūr Kiḷār to Kiḷli Valavaṇ, PNU 46: 5-8)

Look at these children,  
 the crowns of their heads are still soft.

As they watch the elephants,  
 they even forget to cry,  
 stare dumbstruck at the crowd  
 in some new (*virundu*) terror  
 of things unknown.

Now that you've heard me out,  
 do what you will.

(Tr.: A.K. Ramanujan 1985: 122)

(A parenthesis is added by author)

The phrase “*virundiṁ puṇkaṇ nōvuḍaiyar*” needs to be understood here semantically. Since the enemy king's children are brought to a ‘new place’, and they are seeing a lot of ‘new faces’ gathered there for the first time and undergoing ‘a novel’ thrilling experience, all these make them feel ‘a new terror’ (“*virundiṁ puṇkaṇ nōvuḍaiyar*”). Thus, the term *virundu* has become a unique one connoting ‘the bewildered looks’ of those children who have forgotten to cry now. It also refers to the pathetic situation of the children who see the ‘new crowds’ and undergo ‘new distress’ for the first time in their life. Even the warriors who fought with bravery and die in battlefields are also referred as *virundu* (new people) in another context.

*arumpeṛal ulagam nīraiya*  
*virundupeṛ raṇarāl poliganum pugaḷē!*  
 (Kaḷāttalaiyār, *PNU* 62: 18-19)

As the ‘new people’ (*virundu*) arrived and  
 filled the other world (the heaven) that is so hard to obtain,  
 they were treated as ‘new entrants’ by the celestials there,  
 may the glory of both of you glow!

(Tr. Author)

Since the warriors are believed to be the ‘new entrants’ to heaven as other great/noble men do arrive at the unattainable place, they are also termed as *virundu*, ‘new persons’/‘new entrants’. Exactly in the aforesaid meaning (‘new people’/‘unknown people’/‘strangers’), the term in our discussion has been rendered in several couplets of *Tirukkural*<sup>23</sup> too.

However, nowadays even one’s close relatives like maternal/paternal uncle, aunt, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, nephew, niece *etc.* are strangely referred to with the aforesaid term in modern Tamil culture. Denoted as *curram* in *Tolkāppiyam*, *kēḷir/kiḷaiṇar* in Sangam and *Tirukkural* works in ancient times; as *condam*, *bandam*, *currattiṇar*, *condakkārargaḷ*, *uravu muraiyōr*, *etc.* (all just mean ‘relatives’) till recently in Tamil literary works as well as in spoken Tamil, these people are now being referred to as *virundu* or *virundiṇar* in the sense of ‘guests’. Apparently, the shift had taken place in the meaning of the term since the arrival of British and with the introduction of English education in Tamil Nadu.

The entire Indian society inclusive of Tamil culture is basically an ‘informal’ one. It is built essentially on emotionally attached and so closely knitted relationship of people. In Indian social culture, relatives, friends, known persons cannot be termed as ‘guests’ (Tamil. *virundu/virundiṇar*). However, the same people do become ‘guests’ in western culture as allegedly their society is primarily ‘formal’ one. It is a fact that private space is very essential and clearly maintained between individuals (even among children and parents) in the European culture.

It may be relevant here to evoke the expressions of Tolkāppiyar about the excellences of wife, ‘the home maker’ in a chapter of his grammatical work (*Tolkāppiyam*, *Poruḷadigāram*, *Karpiyal* 11). He says, “chastity, love, good behaviour, patience of tender nature, magnanimity, entertaining the *virundu* (new people/un-



known people) promptly and supporting the *curram* (relations), and such others are the excellences of the wife” (Ilakkuvanar 1963: 196). From the above expression, we can comprehend how significant they were – well-treating the ‘strangers/outside/new people’ and taking care of relatives – as they are basic characteristics of Tamils’ family life. Tamils hail that such home-life is the best virtuous one that one can aspire for on this planet. So, a primary place is accorded to such household life in the traditional culture of Tamils since ages. The chief duty of the householder is not only taking care of his wife, children but also *tenpulattār* (manes), *deyvam* (God), *virundu* (outsiders/strangers), *okkal* (relations) and at last *tāṇ* (himself), (*TKL* 43). Household life is considered as the axis for the existence of the World. Hence, there are 200 couplets (in the first section from chapters 5 to 24 of *Tirukkuraḷ*) that talk about the greatness of domestic life. It is asserted that the whole exercise of leading the domestic life along with wife on earth (by not exiled to forest) is only to extend hospitality to *virundu* (strangers/unknown people). This can be understood from the following couplet:

*irundōmbi ilvāḷva dellām virundōmbi*  
*vēḷāṇmai ceydaṛ poruṭṭu.* (*TKL* 81)

Men set up home, toil and earn  
 To tend the guests and do good turn.  
 (Tr. Shuddhananda Bharati 2008: 19)

We can see in the above translation, how the term *virundu* is misinterpreted as ‘guests’. The shift in its semantic is to be seen against the backdrop of ‘invasion of British culture’ on Tamils. Ordinarily, *virundu* (> *virundiṇar*), the ancient Tamil term, is rendered exclusively in the connotation of ‘guests’ (English) now-a-days. But, the term as rendered in ancient Tamil works like

*Tirukkuraḷ* actually do mean the ‘people not known ever before even by face’. So, what the term really denotes is the ‘new people’ or ‘strangers’. Usually, only the strangers/unknown people stay outside one’s home in ancient days. Every house in the past normally had at least one *tiṇṇai*(s) – (a raised platform on either side of the main door of house), just to give shelter temporarily to unknown people like desolates, travellers (even beggars) and so on. A couplet says, “even if it were the nectar of immortality, one (householder) should avoid consuming it alone while *virundu*, ‘some unknown person(s)’ staying outside the house” (TKḶ 82). Evidently, we can understand that the actual implication of the term occurs in the following couplet but again misinterpreted as ‘guests’ by Shuddhananda Bharati, the translator.

*virundu purattadāt tāṇṇḍal cāvā*  
*marundeniṇum vēṇḍarpār ranru.* (TKḶ 82)

To keep out guests cannot be good  
 Albeit you eat nectar-like food.  
 (Tr. Shuddhananda Bharati 2008: 19)

We should take note of the phrase *virundu purattadā*, appearing in the first line of the couplet. The phrase literally means ‘some unknown person(s) staying outside (of house)’. So, any friend or relative who has accessibility to move inside one’s home cannot be termed as ‘guests’ in its prevailing meaning. The people like unknown sages, travellers, desolate, beggars, *etc.* (never seen/met before) were the ones the term *virundu* refers to. Becoming host and taking care of such unknown people’s needs (mainly food) is what is termed as *virundōmbal* (entertaining the unknown people *i.e.* hospitality).

There are several couplets that eulogize one's hospitality. For instance, "the Goddess of wealth will delightfully reside in the house of a person who cheerfully entertains *nalvirundu*, (lit. 'good' or 'worthy unknown people')", (*TKL* 84). Needless to say, when strangers/unknown people visit us, obviously they would be shy and move with hesitation. To do away with their shyness, one needs to welcome them with a smiling face, entertain them with charming words, and hearty hospitality. Otherwise, even by a little indifferent glance, they would wither away. "They are like the delicate flower '*aṇiccam*' which fades just by smelling. So withers *virundu* (the unknown person) just by a wry-faced look" (*TKL* 90). In entertaining any 'unknown person', one should not expect anything in return. The person who treats a stranger with no expectation, indeed, will turn up as '*nalvirundu*' (worthy newcomer) to the celestials after his life.

*celvirundōmbi varuvirundu pārttiruppāṇ*  
*nalvirundu vāṇat tavaṇku.* (*TKL* 86)

Who entertains an unknown person and looks for next  
 is a worthy 'newcomer' to the Gods in heaven  
 (Tr. Author)

This is a unique couplet wherein the unique cultural term *virundu* has been rendered thrice as: *Celvirundu* (the outgoing unknown person entertained), *varuvirundu* (next unknown person to be entertained), and *nalvirundu* (worthy newcomer). In the first two instances, others are the newcomers whereas in the last, the host himself turns up as a 'newcomer' to the Gods of heaven.

Entertaining/engaging 'unknown people' who visit our homes is like conducting *vēlvi* (Skt. *yajña*, the Vedic sacrificial fire). Its benefit cannot be measured by any scale than that of the standard and satisfaction of the entertained *virundu* ('strangers'), (*TKL* 87).

The man of wealth is poor indeed if he fails to extend hospitality to unknown people (*TKL* 89). Such men are the losers destined not to reap the benefits of that *yajña* (*TKL* 88).

However, the semantic shift has taken place with the term *virundu* at modern times. We need to probe and understand the shift of meaning from cultural aspects. The civilization and culture of Europeans, especially the British, soon after 18<sup>th</sup> century, started greatly influencing Indians in all respects. Not only in 'dress-style-attitude' but in every sphere, for instance in 'thought-speech-activities', western culture slowly entered and effected a lot of significant changes. As a result, rapid industrialization took place at the cost of agriculture/farming. Innumerable schools were built up. The Macaulay Education System had, in fact, produced 'literate' for clerical jobs in huge volume. Thereby, nuclear family system has occurred at the cost of the traditional joint-family system. Man started working and living more with machines than his kith and kin. In his machine oriented life style, there is no time and space for others except for his wife and children. It is more pathetic that in the prevailing global consumer world, even one's own parents become burden to a man. So there cropped up many 'old age homes' in cities and towns of India. In present-days scenario, even a close relative has to inform about his/her visiting another's home well in advance. The European's highly sophisticated and individual oriented way of life of 'formal social culture', no doubt, has made its great impact on and influenced hugely the Indian mind setup and their culture. The Tamils also have become incredibly influenced by such alien culture for the last few centuries. This is what seemed to have affected the real meaning of some age-old Tamil cultural terms like *nanri* (good action > thankfulness/gratitude/gratefulness), *virundu* (novelty/newness/strangers > guests) at later days.

## V

**‘Nanri’: Good Deed > Thankfulness/Gratitude/Gratefulness**

India, as an erstwhile British colony, has seen several changes/vicissitudes/incursions in every realm including languages, civilization and culture. Some cultural terms of Indian languages, in due course of time, have acquired new meanings as they have encountered the British and its English language and so have seen its influence on all spheres. So much so, some peculiar cultural terms of the Tamil language, which is known for its ancient civilization-cultural heritage, have seen significant shifts in meanings. For instance, let us consider a unique Tamil term ‘*nanri*’ and its actual meaning that prevailed in the past and its changed connotations in the present time.

The early Tamil term *nanri* which meant ‘good deed’ in the past, is being rendered in the sense of ‘thankfulness’, ‘gratitude’ or ‘gratefulness’ in the evolved modern Tamil, especially in written language. However, its original connotation was *narceyal*, ‘good deed’. N. Kathiraiver Pillai (1984: 870) gives its meaning as *upakāra guṇam*, ‘helping nature’, and *nanmai*, ‘goodness’. The English society used to acknowledge formally whatsoever good thing/help rendered by anyone to them, either by love or obligation, with the term ‘thanks’. It is doubtful whether the term is always rendered consciously in the sense of gratitude. Though it is an expression of evolved civilization yet it is habitually rendered in the sense of formality or customary behaviour. As we know, the European society, including the British, is built upon/centered on ‘formal relationship’. There exists a private space even between the biological parents and their own children. In their culture, a formal relationship is welcomed. Contrary to this western culture, as we know, the Indian society as the ‘society based on informal relationship’ is built on strong-deep love equation. Typically, there exists no space for private sphere or formal customary behaviour in the psyche of Indians including the

Tamils as the society is built on gapless-intense relationship over two millennia. Hence, our forefathers did not acknowledge someone's help or good act by merely uttering the word *nan̄ri*, 'thanks' until the modern times. However, they conveyed their sense of 'gratitude' by some or other 'good action' (*nan̄ri*) in return. The actual meaning of the term *nan̄ri* was indeed 'good deed' or 'good action' in the ancient time but certainly not in the connotation of 'gratitude/thankfulness', the prevailing meaning at present. Perhaps, there exists no exclusive word as such in any Indian language to convey the exact meaning of the English term 'thankfulness'/'gratefulness'/'gratitude'.<sup>24</sup> When someone conveys his/her sense of gratitude for the help which he/she gets by the English term 'thanks', it sounds quite natural whereas by the Tamil word '*nan̄ri*', obviously echoes unnatural or artificial sound bites.

The term *nan̄ri* has been rendered in the sense of 'good deed' or 'good act' alone in the Sangam poems and *Tirukkural*. A hero in *Kuruntogai* anthology<sup>25</sup> in clandestine love phase contemplates to go in search of wealth by leaving his beloved. Then the *tōli* (Skt. *sakhi*), the girlfriend of the heroine, asks him to come early with the wealth earned to get married to her friend. She states,

Lord of the huge mountains  
 where an elephant calf suckles  
 on her mother's abundant breasts!  
 If you are not like the king  
 on the throne who forgot gratitude (*nan̄ri*, 'good deed')  
 to those who helped him in bad times,  
 but remain constant in not  
 forgetting the favors you got from us,  
 the girl with thick, soft hair that of a  
 delicate peacock, will be yours alone.  
 (Kabilar, *KRT* 225, Tr. Vaidehi Herbert)<sup>26</sup>  
 (The parenthesis is added by the author)

The author Vaidehi Herbert, in the above version, has mistakenly rendered the term ‘gratitude’ (appearing in the fifth line) for the Tamil word *nan̄ri* which evidently means ‘good deed’. The translator, by considering the prevailing meaning of the present-day for the term *nan̄ri* of the bygone heroic age, has misinterpreted it as ‘gratitude’ instead of ‘good deed’. It is to be noted here that as such the noun ‘gratitude’, the sense of gratefulness, cannot be forgotten. It is semantically erroneous. But any act, either good or bad, can be forgotten in due course of time. The *tōli* implicitly refers to ‘the sexual union’ that has taken place sometime in the past between the hero and the heroine as ‘*nan̄ri*’, the good action (done by the latter to the former). She emphasizes that the hero should not forget that ‘*nan̄ri*’, that good deed when he accomplishes his mission of earning wealth. And she reminds him to remember the ‘blissful union’, the good action that he had had with the heroine some time ago. Subsequently, she urges him come back to wed her without settling down on alien land by marrying someone else.

It may be stated here that exactly in the aforesaid connotation alone (‘good deed’), the term *nan̄ri* is rendered in all other Sangam anthologies too. But some translators of the classical anthologies like Vaidehi Herbert somehow failed to read the word’s actual connotation and misinterpreted almost in all places. For instance, let us consider the following *Narriṇai* (*NRI*) poem 330. The hero in the poem maintains extramarital relationship with some women of ill reputation. Alas! He is also contemplating to marry them at some point of time and wishes to lead the family life by keeping them in the same house along with the heroine, his legitimate wife. In such a critical situation, the *tōli* makes him understand clearly that though he can marry them yet he might not read what actually lie in their wicked minds; and it is even more unlikely his mistresses could become (*empāḍādal*, lit.

‘becoming like us’, so says the *tōḷi* rhetorically in an inclusive term) like his ‘*nan̄ri cāṇra*’ (good mannered) virtuous/chaste woman (wife) to bring forth boys along with girls wearing lovely bangles to him. Here we may comprehend the actual meaning from the stanzas of the Tamil poem given below:

*yāṇar ūraṇiṇ māṇḷai maḡalirai*  
*emmaṇait tandunī taḷḷiyiṇum avartam*  
*puṇmaṇat tuṇmaiyo aridē avarum*  
*paintoḍi maḡaliroḍu ciṇuvarp payandu*  
*nan̄ri cāṇra karpoḍu*  
*empā ḍādal adaṇiṇum aridē!*  
 (Ālaṅkuḍi Vaṅgaṇār, *NRI* 330: 6-11)

Analyze the misapprehended translation of the above poem by Vaidehi Herbert<sup>27</sup> as follows:

Even if you bring to our house your  
 women with lovely jewels and embrace  
 them, it is difficult to know what is in their  
 minds, and it is even more difficult for  
 them to bring forth girls with beautiful  
 bracelets, and boys with gratitude and honor  
 (to become like us good mannered chaste women  
 to bring forth boys along with girls  
 wearing lovely bangles)  
 (The parenthesis with words in brackets  
 are added by the author)

The author besides misreading the Tamil phrase ‘*nan̄ri cāṇra karpu*’ by translating it as ‘with gratitude and honour’ into English but also mistakenly adjoins the phrase with ‘girls with beautiful bracelets, and boys’ instead of conjoining the same (‘good mannered’) to the ‘chaste woman (wife)’. Whatever may be the context the term *nan̄ri* – not only in the aforesaid poem but



in the entire corpus of Sangam poems – needs to be rendered as ‘good deed’ or simply as ‘good’, an adjective to any noun.

Contradicting her usual rendering of the Tamil term *nan̄ri*, the author Vaidehi Herbert, however, has equated it perfectly once into English as ‘good’ to the stanza of a poem from the same *Nar̄riṇai* anthology. Let us observe the Tamil stanzas of the poem follow:

..... vāntōy verpa!  
*nan̄ri* viḷaivum tīdoḍu varumeṇa  
*an̄runar* karindaṇa lāyiṇ kun̄rattut  
*tēmmudir* cilambil taḍai-iya  
*vēymarul* paṇaittōl̄ al̄iyalaḷ maṇṇē.  
 (Author name not known, *NRI* 188: 5-9)

The hero frequently visits his ladylove during day times and clandestinely enjoys her love by the hill side. He has not thought of marrying his beloved and saving her reputation. As it becomes a worrisome matter, the heroine expects him to marry her at the earliest. Concerned for her esteemed life, the *tōḷi* refuses to arrange for the tryst any more but urges him to marry the heroine without any further delay. She makes it clear to him that the heroine will not allow him to exploit her physically any more. So she implicitly makes him understand the situation. The author Vaidehi Herbert<sup>28</sup> here renders the Tamil term *nan̄ri* suitably as ‘good’ and also puts the other details perfectly as in the following words:

She understands well,  
 that what can be good, can also lead to  
 bad things. She will not let her curved,  
 rounded arms, like bamboo, waste away  
 in the mountain slopes with mature honey.

It may be mentioned here that the term *nan̄ri*<sup>29</sup> has been rendered exactly in the sense of ‘good deed’ as in the couplets of *Tirukkuraḷ*. As we know, the ancient Tamil society, which highly regarded the agricultural profession, also duly respected the people engaged in ‘academic activities’ *i.e.* ‘education’. It, indeed, considers as a *nan̄ri* (a good deed) of fathers – whosoever offers the best education possible to his son and makes him top in his school/institution. It is evident in the *Tirukkuraḷ* that follows:

*tandai magarkārrum nan̄ri avaiyattu*  
*mundi iruppac ceyal.* (TKL 67)

“The one good (*nan̄ri*), which a father can give to his son, is to ensure the son is well educated and knowledgeable and is placed ahead of all those in the assembly of learned scholars” (Vishwanathan 2011: 25). When the author R. Vishwanathan renders the unique cultural specific Tamil word *nan̄ri* perfectly as ‘the one good’ but his predecessors somehow could not catch up with the exact meaning as they have rendered it as ‘the benefit’ (Drew & John Lazarus 1989: 15), as ‘duty’ (Bharati 2008: 15) respectively. Here the Tamil phrase “*tandai magarkārrum nan̄ri*” needs proper interpretation. If we consider the prevailing meaning of the phrase as ‘thankfulness/gratitude/gratefulness’, then we would end up with a gross mistake. Thereupon, the actual connotation of the term will become erroneous. Because, no father needs to (convey) do ‘thankfulness’ (the present day connotation to the word *nan̄ri*) to his son but a ‘good deed’ only. The learned men who excel in the fields of education-knowledge-wisdom-characteristics were indeed the need of the hour during the *Tirukkuraḷ* days as the man was gradually moving away from noble qualities. No doubt, it is only the knowledge acquired by education provides ample scope for anyone to comprehend what

is good or bad. Education, indeed, drives a man into a righteous path. Providing education is the one good deed that any father can do to his son even in the ancient days. This is what seems to be the idea of Tiruvaḷḷuvar here. For the *nanri* ('the good deed of providing a proper education') of (done by) the father, the son is expected to make sure of one thing that needs to be done in return. That is to make others say, "what great penance did his father to obtain him"! This is what Tiruvaḷḷuvar intends to connote by rendering the word *udavi*, 'the help' for denoting a befitting action in return that a son can do for his father.

*magan̄ tandaikkārrum udavi ivan̄tandai*  
*en̄nōrrān̄ kolleṇuñ col. (TKL 70)*

The couplet delightfully states: "A son can render 'one help' to his father (for the good deed done by the latter) by making others express in amazement, "what penance did his father to obtain him!" A son is expected to ascend to that great position by his grand academic performance and role model characteristics. Essentially, the word *udavi* rendered in the couplet, in fact, draws our attention here. The great philosopher Tiruvaḷḷuvar has not employed any Tamil word meaning 'duty' or 'responsibility' in its place for denoting the 'helping/supportive act' of the son. The author could have rendered the word '*nanri*' (in the present days' prevailing sense of 'thanks/gratitude/gratefulness') instead of '*udavi*' here for indicating the 'aiding' or 'supportive act' of the son. But the preacher of the Gospel of Maxims has not done so, why? Because, **showing regard to any good deed of others just as a routine act is not Tamil culture**. So the son is expected to recompense his father's good deed by his noble qualities by becoming learned.

Any action, either ‘good’ or ‘bad’, does not suddenly show up with anyone. For any action, there are certain preceding factors and effects that crop up in future. Needless to say, one’s righteous conduct alone becomes the seed for his/her *nan̄ri*, ‘good action’. *Tīyolukkam*, ‘bad actions’ always bring troubles. This truth is impeccably delivered in the following *Tirukkuraḷ*.

*nan̄rikku vittāgum nalloḷukkam tīyolukkam*  
*en̄rum iḍumbait tarum.* (TKḶ 138)

Good conduct sows seeds of blessings  
Bad conduct endless evil brings.  
(Tr. Shuddhananda Bharati 2008: 29)

Though small in magnitude the *nan̄ri*, ‘good action’ that is rendered at a crucial time is greater than the world (TKḶ 102); is bigger than benefits of ocean (TKḶ 103). The knower of advantage weighs the *nan̄ri* though it is small as millet but as large as a palmyra tree (TKḶ 104). Recognizing any body’s timely ‘good action’ (*nan̄ri*) is termed as ‘*ceynn̄nan̄ri aṛidal*’ i.e. ‘remembering good deed (of others)’. ‘If anyone forgets to think of some one’s ‘good deed’ rendered at crucial times, then there is no hope for him/her in the life to progress’ (TKḶ 110), thus pronounces Tiruvalluvar emphatically in a couplet. Man normally tends to forget, especially, in matters not so gainful to him. While conveniently forgetting some one’s good actions, he usually forgets the bad ones. What is to be kept in mind and what is not to be? TVR clarifies the doubt in the following *Tirukkuraḷ*.

*nan̄ri marappadu nan̄ran̄ru nan̄ralladu*  
*aṇ̄re marappadu nan̄ru.* (TKḶ 108)

It is not good to forget good deeds; good to forget  
bad deeds in that very moment. (Tr. Author)

We can comprehend the meaning of the term *nanri* rendered in the above couplet plainly as ‘good deed’. But if we consider the prevailing present connotation for the aforesaid term as ‘thankfulness/gratitude/gratefulness’ then arises the ambiguity. What a person needs to remember is ‘good deed’ of others but not their ‘thankfulness’ or ‘gratitude’. What a person needs to forget is ‘bad deed’ of others that too at the very moment. As there is no exclusive antonym for *nanri* in Tamil, Tiruvalluvar just adds ‘*alladu*’ – (in the meaning of English prefixes like ‘*ir/im/in/un/non*’ and so on.) – ‘*a*’ suffix in Tamil denoting a negative sense to the existing term *nanri* (*nanru+alladu* > *nanralladu* = not good). This indicates well the grand culture of the ancient Tamils as they did not conceive negative terms for certain positive words. For instance, the words *nanri* (good deed), and *nārram* (fragrance/good smell) as such do not have antonyms in Tamil. It is to be noted that the terms *nanri* and *nanru* are the synonyms rendered here for ‘good deed’. So we do come across the word ‘*nanru*’<sup>30</sup> in the sense of the aforesaid term in several of *Tirukkural* couplets.

Therefore, it suffices to say that **honoring some one’s ‘good deed’ customarily by words was not a part of the ancient Tamils’ culture** but certainly a shift has taken place in the connotation of the unique term *nanri* (to mean as ‘thankfulness/gratitude/gratefulness’) as well as in the Tamil culture soon after the advent of the British and English education in our country.

## VI

### ‘Nārram’: Good Fragrance/Good Smell > Bad Smell/ Rotten Smell

Indian culture, especially Tamil culture, before the advent of the British, had significantly lost its identity with the invasion of the Sanskrit culture. **The ancient Tamil society was not caste oriented like the Aryans in the beginning.** So, hierarchal socie-

ty was not then prevalent. Of course, the then society had divisions based on profession yet arguably no hierarchy of high and low existed. Probably, the early Tamil society seems to have inherited Aryan's *Varṇāśrama Dharma*<sup>31</sup> during *Tirukkuraḷ* period. In the place of now prevailing British/English culture, Aryan/Sanskrit culture was ruling Tamil culture, till a few centuries ago. Notably, still we can see the supremacy of Sanskrit culture on religious sphere such as Gods, worship, festivals, rituals, and ceremonies. The irony is that now-a-days, we see name plates hanging on the walls of temples of Tamil Nadu stating: "*Iṅgu tamīḷilum arccaṇai ceyyappaḍum*" (lit. "*Arcana*"<sup>32</sup> will be done here also in Tamil"). The suffix '*um*' (also) added to the term 'Tamil' is nothing but simply ridiculous. The temples are on Tamil land, and the worshippers are mostly Tamils. Besides, they are duly taken care of by the religious Tamils and the government of Tamil Nadu but strange is that Sanskrit only rule the Tamils' religious sphere till date. Alas! The most visible jeering is that Tamil is hardly seen even in the names of Tamils but Sanskrit only overrules for the last two millennia.

Well, there are enormous differences between Sanskrit and Tamil, not only in the spheres of 'letters-words-meaning' but also on their 'theme-structure-style'. In the vocabulary of Sanskrit, like in any other language, there are plenty of positive terms which have negatives parallel. As we know, positive terms in English language become their negatives while some prefixes are added. For instance, a term 'possible' becomes negative as 'impossible' with the prefix '*im*'. Similarly, we could find such word formation in Sanskrit/Hindi too. There are many positive terms in Sanskrit which transform as negatives with a prefix '*a*', the very first vowel letter of several languages including the Sanskrit. For example, *nyāy* (justice) X *anyāy* (injustice); *nīti* (virtue/justice) X

*anīti* (impropriety/injustice); *dharm* (righteousness) X *adharm* (immorality).

In the similar fashion, if the prefix ‘*dur*’ (meaning in the sense of ‘bad’, ‘wicked’, ‘devoid of’) is added to some positive words then they change their meanings into negatives. For e.g.: *adr̥ṣṭ* (luck/fortune) X *duradr̥ṣṭ* (unluck/misfortune); *ātma* (soul) X *durātma* (bad soul/spirit); *bhāgya* (fortune) X *durbhāgya* (misfortune). But there is no such word formation in the Tamil grammatical tradition. However, some Tamil positive terms with the aforesaid Sanskrit prefix ‘*dur*’, invariably become negative ones. Let us consider here the Tamil term ‘*nār̥ram*’. The term usually refers to ‘smell, scent, odour’ (Vaiyapuri Pillai 1982: 2235) in positive sense. But when it gets ‘*dur*’, a prefix of Sanskrit, then it means ‘bad smell’, ‘bad scent, ‘bad odour’ – all in the negative sense. Apparently, the term in the negative sense is very much in vogue for centuries in colloquial Tamils. Evidently, Sanskrit, the language of the elites, has been ruling the minds of Tamil common man, perhaps unconsciously, in the realm of language and vocabulary. The term commonly denoting smell/scent/odour, however, has been generally rendered in the poems of Sangam works and *Tirukkuraḷ* couplets especially in the sense of (good) smell, scent, and odour. Before seeing some stanzas wherein the term occurs, let us know its etymological references with the following quotes.

*Paripāḍal*, the fifth book of the Eight Anthologies, comprises a number of theme poems on Vaiyai, the river of Madurai city, Lord Tirumāl (Vishṇu) and Lord Murugaṇ (Subramaṇiyaswāmī). Every religious person believes that his/her God is omnipotent and, residing ever in each and everything. So the Vaishṇavites do consider that their God Vishṇu is ever dwelling omnipotent upon the five basic elements of nature. With such notions at his heart, a poet named Kaḍuvaṇ Ḵaveyiṇaṇār, while rendering an invocation on Tirumāl, has employed the aforesaid term *nār̥ram* in the following manner:

*tīyinuḷ teralnī! pūvinuḷ nārṛamnī!*  
*kallinuḷ maṇiyumnī! collinuḷ vāymainī!*  
*aṛattinuḷ aṇbunī! maṛattinuḷ maindunī!*  
*vēdattu maṛainī! bhūdattu mudalumnī!*  
*veṇcuḍar oḷiyumnī! tiṅgaḷuḷ aḷiyumnī!*  
*aṇaittumnī! aṇaittinuḷ poruḷumnī! .....*  
 (Kaḍuvaṇ Iḷaveyiṇaṇār, PPL 3: 63-68)

You are the heat within the fire; Fragrance within the flower;  
 Gem within the stone; Truth within the word;  
 Mercy within justice; Might behind valour;  
 Secret within the scripture; Foremost among elements;  
 Splendour in the sun; Coolness in the moon;  
 You are everything; and also the inner substance of these.  
 (Tr. Dr. Pandiyan)<sup>33</sup>

Unambiguously the meaning of the term *nārṛam*, occurring in the abovementioned poem, is very clear. The poet while expressing every splendid attribute of Lord Viṣṇu, he sees HIM as the *nārṛam* of flowers too. As flowers are mostly known for their ‘captivating fragrance’ and ‘delightful luster’, also some other poets of *Paripāḍal* perceive the Lord in the same vein. Thus, the term has occurred in a few more poems in *Paripāḍal* as follow:

*niṇ nārṛamum oṇmaiṇuṇ pūvaiyuḷa* (PPL 4: 29)

Your fragrance and luster are in the  
*kāyā* flowers!  
 (Tr. Vaidehi Herbert)<sup>34</sup>

*pulamum pūvaṇuṇ nārṛamumnī* (PPL 1: 48-49)

You are the Vedas, the Brahma and fragrance.  
 (Tr. Author)



Etymologically, the term *nārram* is derived of the verbal root ‘*nāru*’ and the suffix ‘*am*’, a metrical syllable making verbs as nouns in Tamil. The root word *nāru* simply means ‘to emit a sweet smell’, ‘to give forth perfume’ (Vaiyapuri Pillai 1982: 2236) and ‘to release a good fragrance’. Since God is perceived as ‘the eternal grace’ and ‘the shining light’, the poets often earnestly see HIM as flower that emits good smell; extends delightful luster. Contrary to this connotation, the same term ‘*nāru*’ is very rarely rendered denoting ‘bad smell’ or ‘stench/stink’ in some poems while linked to the term ‘*pulavu*’ (flesh). As an infinitive, the term *pulavu* simply means ‘to smell (of) raw flesh’ (Vaiyapuri Pillai, *Ibid.*, p. 2787) or ‘raw fish’. For example, a poet named *Ilavēṭṭaṇār* in *Akanāṇūru* anthology employs this term exactly in the aforesaid connotation. He refers to a big-trunked elephant that attacked a huge tiger in a wild forest through which a hero goes regularly at nights to see his beloved. In the big fight, the tiger gets defeated. Its blood and flesh got sprinkled over the elephant’s trunk in the struggle. They began smelling bad. Aptly referring to this stinking smell, the poet employs the phrase ‘*pulavunāru*’ in the second stanza of the poem following:

*irumpuli tolaitta perunkai vēlattup*  
*pulavunāru pugarnudal kaḷuvak kaṅgul*  
*aruvi tanda aṇaṅguḍai neḍuṅkōṭṭu*  
 (Madurai Aruvai Vāṇigaṇ Ilavēṭṭaṇār, ANU 272: 1-3)

But in the same poem, its own noun form *nārram* is strikingly rendered in the positive connotation viz. ‘fragrance’/‘good smell’. The hero is depicted as seeing his ladylove regularly at the usual meeting spot of ‘night-tryst’ (*iravukkuri*). One night, when he is about to reach the spot, his beloved was expressing her worry to her *tōli*, whether he would marry her soon or not? Thereafter the girlfriend (as the nearby lover listened) shares her positive

opinion to her that he would marry her soon. In her conversation, she mentions about his attire adorned with flowers. She says then that the hero wearing a strand of *kūdaḷam* flowers woven with wild jasmine (that grow abundantly near flowing water) were just spreading their *nāṛṛam* (fragrances) pleasantly. From the above sketch, we can understand that Tamil men in the past did wear flowers like their women but in the forms of *kaṇṇi* (a cluster of flowers tied on either side of the string) and *tār* (one end untied garland of flowers) that project them good-looking and sweet-smelling by the sheer luster and fragrance of flowers. This cultural information is mentioned in *Kalittogai* (*KLT*), (the sixth book of Eight Anthology) as well, too in the following words:

*nīrnīvik kaṇṇarapūk kamaḷuṅkāl niṇmārbiṇ  
tār<sup>nā</sup>ṛṛam eṇayivaḷ madikkumaṇ madittāṅgē*  
(Nallanduvaṇār, *KLT* 126: 10-11)

When she smells the fragrant blossoms in the water,  
she'll think they are from your garlanded chest.  
(Tr. Vaidehi Herbert)<sup>35</sup>

The phrase *tār<sup>nā</sup>ṛṛam*, appearing in the second line of the quoted poem, conspicuously expresses that the (one end) untied garland worn by the hero was fragrant like the fragrant flowers that blossom in the pools of seashore. Not only these water bodies but also other native water-sources like *kuḷam* (ponds), and *poygai* (natural/full ponds) naturally tend to emit good smell as they are hugely filled with variety of flowers, fishes, and creepers like *vaḷḷai*. For instance, a phrase “*nāṛṛamcāl naḷipoygai*” (lit. ‘Cool pond filled with great fragrance of flowers’) as mentioned in one of the poems of *Kalittogai* (16: 11) evidently reveals the aforesaid fact.

In earlier days, weddings of Tamils traditionally took place before the hours of sunrise. The same ancient family/social functions now-a-days take place after the hours of sunrise but before noon. As variety of fragrant flowers are available abundantly in Tamil Nadu, Tamils known for bedecking brides and bridegrooms and lavishly decorating the wedding halls. The couple and marriage halls thus beautified with fragrant flowers stupendously produce captivating good smells, all around especially in the cool early morning hours. To depict this fact, a poet named Marudaṇḍi Nāgaṇār has rendered it so poetically while describing the extra-marital relationship of the hero in a poem (KLT 66: 9-12). The hero returns home with lovely fragrance at dawn after seeking sexual pleasure with women adorned with flowers in their house. As he had the blissful meeting with other women, having decked himself with good smelling flowers, his body was still emitting the splendid fragrance in the early hours. The heroine points out his infidelity, though sarcastically but aesthetically, with the fine words “*vaduṇai yaṅkamaḷ nāṛram vaigaraip perradai*” (*Ibid.*).<sup>36</sup> It is noticeable that the term *nāṛram*, as worded in this sentence, just denotes ‘good fragrance’/ ‘sweet-smell’. Exactly, in the same sense, the term has been rendered by several poems of Sangam classics.<sup>37</sup>

Later, the term *nāṛram* has occurred in *Tirukkuraḷ* also in two couplets just in the same connotation of ‘good fragrance’/ ‘sweet smell’. A hero after meeting his beloved, exchanges his views about the beauty of her physical features to his close friend. He praises,

*muṛimēṇi muttam muṛuval verināṛram*  
*vēluṅkaṇ vēyttōḷ avaṭku.* (TKL 1113)

The bamboo-shouldered has pearl-like smiles,  
Fragrant breath and lance-like eyes.  
(Tr. Shuddhananda Bharati 2008: 229)

The hero feels that his beloved's natural body odour is an 'intoxicating fragrance' (*verinārram*). Similarly, another hero shares his feeling on the smile of his sweetheart to the *tōli* (the girlfriend of heroine) and eulogizes:

*mugaimokkuḷ uḷḷadu nārrampōl pēdai*  
*nagaimokkuḷ uḷḷadoṇ ruṇḍu.* (TKL 1274)

Like scent in bud secrets conceal  
 In the bosom oh her half smile.  
 (Tr. Shuddhananda Bharati 2008: 261)

He assumes and conveys to the girlfriend that there is something concealed already in the heroine's meek smile like the 'fragrance' (*nārram*) is contained in yet to be blossomed bud.

As we have seen, the term *nārram* thus referring to 'sweet-smell' denoted only such meanings in Tamil literary works until the modern period. We are unable to know, who had changed its positive meaning into negative, and in what context? Why? It needs to be mentioned here that the very positive term does have no negative word in Tamil, neither in colloquial nor in written languages till date, except the sanskritized term '*durnārram*'. It is a unique culture of Tamils – certain inauspicious events/incidents/things are not to be mentioned openly but referred to with auspicious terms. The very word underlines the fact that sometimes some words of some languages could lose their original meanings and earn new implications when they encounter other languages and their cultural elements.

While these terms *cānrōr* (noble men), *nanri* (good deed), *naṭpu* (love i.e. the sexual relationship), *nōkku* (sight of love), *virundu* (novelty), and *nārram* (fragrance) on the one hand act as a tool to grasp the literary heritage of Tamil language, on the other hand, they serve as a historical evidence to understand the cultural history as well as cultural mobility of Tamils. Not though

always explicitly but otherwise these terms do convey the encounters that took place between Tamil/Tamils and Sanskrit/Aryans and English/British at different times. In a nutshell, behind the formation and changes of meaning that take place with some words, often, there are various socio-religious-cultural factors which act as bolts and nuts.

## Notes

- \* This essay is the revised version of the paper entitled “**Deciphering the Peculiar Cultural Significance of Some Terms in Tirukkural**” presented in “The 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference-Seminar on Tamil Studies” held at University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, during 29<sup>th</sup> Jan. – 01<sup>st</sup> Feb. 2015.
1. *Cāṇṛāṇmai* (Sublimity/virtue/goodness): *TKL* 981, 989, 990.
  2. *Cāḷbu* (Excellence, nobility, greatness etc.): *TKL* 983, 984, 986–988, 1013, 1064.
  3. *Māṭciyir periyōr* (The great personas of glorious traits): *Puranāṇūru* 192 by Kaṇiyaṇ Pūṅkuṇṇāṇār.
  4. *īṇru purantarudal eṇṭalaik kaḍaṇē*  
*cāṇṛōṇ ākkudal tandaikkuk kaḍaṇē*  
*vēlvaḍittuk koḍuttal kollarkuk kaḍaṇē*  
*naṇṇaḍai nalgal vēndarkuk kaḍaṇē*  
*oḷiṇuvāl aruṇcamam murukkik*  
*kaḷireṇḍu peyardal kāḷaikkuk kaḍaṇē.*  
(Poṇmuḍiyār, *Puranāṇūru* 312)
  5. *cirril narrūṇ parri niṇmagaṇ*  
*yāṇḍula ṇōveṇa viṇavudi eṇmagaṇ*  
*yāṇḍula ṇāyiṇum ariyēṇ ṍrum*  
*pulicēṇḍu pōgiya kallaḷai pōla*

*īṇra vayirō iduvē*

*tōṇruvaṇ mādō pōrkkalāt tāṇē*

(Kāvaṇpeṇḍu, *Puraṇāṇūru* 86)

6. *yāṇḍupala vāga naraṇyila āgudal*  
*yāṇḍāgiya reṇa viṇavudir āyiṇ*  
*māṇḍayēṇ maṇaiviyodu makkaḷum niraṇbiṇar;*  
*yāṇḍaṇ ḍaṇaiyaṇēṇ ilaiyarum; vēṇḍaṇum*  
*allavai ceyyāṇ kākkum adantalai*  
*āṇṇraṇ daḍaṇgiya koḷgaic*  
*cāṇṇrōr palaryāṇ vāḷum ūrē.*  
 (Picirāṇḍaiyār, *Puraṇāṇūru* 191)
7. Source: <http://Sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.com/purananuru-151-200/>
8. *īṇra poḷudir periduvakkum taṇṇmagāṇaic*  
*cāṇṇrōṇ eṇakkēṭṭa tāy* (TKL 69)
9. *Cāṇṇrōr*: TKL 115, 118, 148, 197, 299, 328, 458, 656, 657, 802, 840, 922, 923, 982, 985, 1014, 1078.
10. *Cāṇṇrōr*: *Nāḷaḍiyār* 68, 100, 126, 133, 151-153, 165, 179, 190, 227, 298, 316, 343, 344, 349, 356, 357, 368.
11. *Kaṇṇiṇai nōkku* (sight of love of two eyes): TKL 1100; *Ciṇunōkkam* (glance/gaze): TKL 1092; *Nōkka* (to glance/gaze/look): TKL 1098; *Nōkkam* (glancing/gazing): TKL 1085; *Nōkkāmai* (not glancing/gazing): TKL 1095; *Nōkki* (having glanced/gazed): TKL 1173, 1093, 1279; *Nōkkiya* (glanced/gazed): TKL 1172; *Nōkkināl* (she who glanced/gazed): TKL 1082, 1093; *Nōkkiṇum* (even if glanced/gazed): TKL 1320; *Nōkku* (sight of love/glance/gaze): TKL 972, 1082, 1091, 1094, 1097; *Nōkkudal* (glancing/gazing): TKL 1099; *Edirṇōkku* (counter glance/gaze): TKL 1082; *Piṇaṇ maṇai nōkkāda pērāṇmai* (noble manliness of not glancing/gazing/looking at the wife of others): TKL 148; *Podu nōkku* (common looking): TKL 1099; *Maḍa nōkku* (the meek looks of hind or fawn like looks/gaze/glance): TKL 1089; *Nilāṇ nōkkum* (stoop looking/ glancing/gazing at the ground): TKL 1114.
12. Source: <http://sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.com/akananuru-301-400/>
13. Source: <http://sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.wordpress.com/kurunthokai-1-100/>
14. *māṇṇiṇai nōkkiṇ maḍanal lāḷai*  
*īṇra naṭṭiṇ karuḷā nāyiṇum*  
 (Kayamaṇār, *Akanāṇūru* 195)

*uyirkalan donriya donrupaḍu naṭpir*  
*ceyirtir neñcamoḍu ceṇindōr pōla*  
*ārtuyil iyambu nāḍaṇ*  
 (Nakkīrar, *Akanāṇūru* 205)

*mārpurit tāgiya maruvil naṭpē*  
 (Cēndam Bhūdaṇār, *Akanāṇūru* 247)

*peruvarai aḍukkattuk kiḷavōṇ eṇrum*  
*aṇrai yaṇṇa naṭpiṇaṇ*  
 (Kabilar, *Kurnutogai* 385)

Source: <http://sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.wordpress.com/kurun-thokai-101-200/>

Source: <http://sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.com/akananuru-301-400/>

17. *māṇpiṇai nōkkiṇ maḍanal lālai*  
*īṇra naṭpir karuḷā ṇāyiṇum*  
 (Kayamaṇār, *Akanāṇūru* 195)
18. *Naṭpu* (Everlasting emotional/soul mingled relationship): *TKL* 106, 107, 187, 338, 381, 781, 782, 785-791, 793-795, 798, 800-803, 813, 816, 817, 821, 829, 830, 874, 1122, 1165.
19. *Keḷutagamai* (Friendship): *TKL* 700, 802, 803, 804, 808.
20. *Kēṇmai* (Friendship): *TKL* 106, 441, 519, 709, 782, 792, 797, 798, 800, 807, 809, 811, 812, 815, 822, 838.
21. *Toḍarbu* (Friendship): *TKL* 783, 802, 806, 819, 820, 920.
22. *Naṭṭār* (Friends): *TKL* 192, 679, 804, 805, 808, 826, 908, 1293.
23. *Virundu* (New people/Unknown people/Strangers): *TKL* 43, 81-90, 153, 1211, 1268.
24. For instance, let us infer etymologically the meanings of the following Hindi terms: *Shukriya* (*shu* > *su* = excellent, + *kriya* = action > lit. excellent action; *shubh* = auspicious/benign + *kriya* = action/deed > *shubhkriya* > *shukriya* > lit. auspicious/benign action; *su* = pious/good, + *karm* = action/deed > *sukarm* > lit. pious/good action).
25. *kaṇrutan payamulai mānda munṇil*  
*tiṇaiṇiḍi uṇṇum peruṅkal nāḍa!*  
*keṭṭaviḍat tuvanda udavi kaṭṭil*  
*vīruperru maranda maṇṇaṇ pōla*  
*naṇṇimarāṇ damaiyā yāyiṇ meṇcīrk*

*kalimayir kalāvattanṇa ivaḷ  
olimeṇ kūndal uriyavāl niṇakkē!*  
(Kabilar, *Kuruntogai* 225)

26. Source: <http://sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.wordpress.com/kurunthokai-201-300/>
27. Source: <http://sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.com/natrinai-301-400/>
28. Source: <http://sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.com/natrinai-101-200/>
29. *Nāṇri* (Good deed): *TKL* 67, 97, 102, 104, 108, 110, 138, 685, 994; *Nāṇrikan*: *TKL* 117; *Nāṇri payavā viṇai*: *TKL* 439, 652; *Ceyn-nāṇri*: *TKL* 110.
30. *Nāṇru* (Good deed): *TKL* 108, 109, 422, 467, 715, 932, 1072, 1225.
31. *Varṇāśrama Dharma*: *Varṇā* means colour and historians tell us that the fair-skinned Aryans (migrating from Iran and Asia Minor) found the indigenous people in the Indus Valley region dark. From this gradually evolved the caste system, which regulated interaction and intercourse among the Aryan and non-Aryan people of India. This system came to be called *chaturvarṇa* (four colours) because it identified four stratas of people in society. (Cf.: C.T. Indira, *The legend of Nandan – Nandan Kathai*, p. xvi)
32. *Arcana* is a Sanskrit term denotes a form of worship performed in temples/shrines offering flowers, fruits, coconut, while reciting Sanskrit *slokas* and mantras as per Vedic practice.
33. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paripāṭal>  
Accessed on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2014.
34. Source: <http://sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.com/kali-pal/>
35. Source: <http://sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.com/a-kalithokai-neythal/>
36. *aṇai meṇṭōḷ yāmvāḍa amartuṇai puṇarndunī  
maṇa maṇaiyā yeṇavanda mallaliṇ māṇbaṇrō  
poduk koṇḍa kavvaiyul pūvaṇip polindanin  
vaduvai yaṅkamaḷ nārram vaigaraip perradai*  
(Marudaṇiḷa Nāgaṇār, *Kalittogai* 66: 9–12)

I, with my soft, delicate arms am fading away, and you have been in pleasurable pursuits with women you desire, in their homes. Causing slander, you united with women adorned with flowers. You have come here at dawn with their lovely fragrances, for me to see your splendor.



(Tr. Vaidehi Herbert)

Source: <http://sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.com/a-kalithokai-maru-tham/>

37. *orūu koḍiyiyal nallār kuralnārrat turra  
muḍiyudir pūntādu moymbiṇa vāgat  
toḍiya yemakkunī yāraiyo periyārk  
kaḍiyarō yārrādavar*

(Marudaṇiḷa Nāgaṇār, *Kalittogai* 88: 1–4)

Go away! Who are you to touch me, coming  
here with pollen dropped from the flowers  
adorning the thick, fragrant hair of vine-like  
concubines? Is the one who is suffering any  
inferior to the one who is powerful?

(Tr. Vaidehi Herbert)

Source: <http://sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.com/a-kalithokai-maru-tham/>

*verikamaḷ koṇḍa nārramum ciṛiya  
pacalai pāyтарu nudalum nōkki  
vaṛidugu neñcinaḷ piṛidoṇru kāṭṭi  
veyya yuyirttaṇaḷ yāyē*

(Kabilar, *Narriṇai* 368: 6-9)

Smelling the strong fragrance in her  
thick dark hair, and looking at the pallor  
on her small forehead, mother sighed deeply.

(Tr. Vaidehi Herbert)

Source: <http://sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.com/natrinai-301-400/>

*koḍiyayai vāḷi tumbiyin nōy  
paḍugadi lammayā ṇiṇak kuraitteṇa*

.....

*tārupaḍu pīram ūdi vērupaḍa  
nārra miṇmaiyr pacalai ūḍāy*

(Tumbicēr Kīraṇīr, *Narriṇai* 277: 1-8)

O cruel honeybee! May you live long!

You swarm clusters of *peerikai*

flowers on the thorn fence  
 protecting our house, and do not  
 buzz around my fragrance-lacking  
 body with yellow pallor spots.  
 I am afflicted with pain.

(Tr. Vaidehi Herbert)

Source: <http://sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.com/natrinai-201-300/>

*pulavu nār ratta paintaḍi*  
*pūnār ratta pugaikoḷi-i ūṇcuvai*  
*kaṛicō ruṇḍu varundutoḷi lalladu*  
*piṛidu toḷilariyā yāgaliṇ nanrum*  
 (Kabilar, *Puranāṇūru* 14: 12-15)

The hands of those who sing your praises, are soft  
 since they know no stress, other than that of eating  
 rice cooked with meat, and chunks of fresh meat  
 roasted in fire with flower-fragrant smoke.

(Tr. Vaidehi Herbert)

Source: <http://sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.com/purananuru-1-50/>

*nārṛa uṇavi ṇoru māṛra*  
*arum peṛa lulagam niṛaiya*  
*virundu perranarāl poliganum pugaḷē!*  
 (Kaḷāttalaiyār, *Puranāṇūru* 62: 17-19)

Those who eat fragrant food, wear flowers that don't fade, do  
 not blink, and guide the new arrivals in the other world that  
 is so hard to obtain. May the glory of both of you glow!

(Tr. Vaidehi Herbert)

Source: <http://sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.com/purananuru-51-100/>

*tuṇiyal malaruṇkaṇ colvēru nārṛam*  
*kaṇiyiṇ malarin mayirkaṇ cīppiṇṇadu*  
*tuṇiyal naṇinī niṇcūḷ*  
 (Nallanduvaṇār, *Paripāḍal* 8: 53-55)

One with flower-like eyes! Do not  
 be angry. What you say is not right. The odor is

that of fruits and flowers carried by the wind.

I swear ..... ..

(Tr. Vaidehi Herbert)

Source: <http://sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.com/kali-pal/>

*tōrramō roṭṭa malarkamaḷ taṇcāndiṇ*  
*nārrattir pōrri nagaiyo ḍum pōttandu*  
 (Nallaḷiciyār, *Paripāḍal* 16: 25-26)

He sees her

looks like that of a flower, is aware of the cool fragrance  
 of sandal, laughs and leaves with her.

(Tr. Vaidehi Herbert)

Source: <http://sangamtranslationsbyvaidehi.com/kali-pal/>

## Chapter: Three

### **Sleeping to Salvation: Vedic Codes and Practices\***

Every society, since anthropological times or at least from the pre-historical period, is being built upon or governed by certain faiths/religions, ceremonies/rituals, customs/social norms, rules and regulations/laws, and so on. Arts and literatures that emerge from any given socio-religious-cultural milieu naturally do have a greater role in evolving and establishing people's cultural traits. As observed by literary theoreticians elsewhere, "every literary work, irrespective of its genre, has to have the twofold functions *viz.* 'educate' and 'entertain' the people". In this endeavour, didactic works attempt predominantly to 'educate' or 'impart' certain ideas/view-points/thoughts/values/philosophies *etc.*, to people rather than 'entertaining' them. But other literary genres such as lyrics, epics, novels, short stories, plays, *etc.*, indulge largely in 'entertaining', of course, to some extent may be 'educating'/'imparting' certain values of life. 'Educating' the people is a kind of masculine act typically carried out since ages by the authoritative feudal lords, hegemonic bourgeois, highly learned, of course, the eloquent poets. Virtues, nobilities, duties, responsibilities, seldom rights are usually imparted to people while 'educating' them. Needless to say, every religion brain-washes people to uphold certain virtues, to undertake varied kinds

of *vrats* (observances/fasts) and perform some specific rituals in the disguise of religious observance. Primeval

Conspicuously, we notice the influence of different religions in the thoughts and cultural life of Tamils – the people of pre-historic ethnicity who possess a long heritage of socio-political-religious and philosophical merits like the esteemed Greeks. Especially, we see the influences of canons, doctrines, and ideologies of Jainism, Buddhism and Vedic Hinduism seemingly in the Eighteen Tamil Didactic Works called *Paḍiṇṇ Kīlkkāṇakku Nūlga!*<sup>1</sup> (c. A.D. 300–600). The manner these entities of faiths entering into the religious systems and social norms of the ancient Tamils – is indeed a phenomenon which warrants an earnest study. As we are aware, among the three creeds mentioned above, only Vedic Hinduism is constantly prevailing in the realm of Indian Culture by becoming ‘hand in gloves’ – shrewdly managing strong nexus with the entities of ruling classes and feudal societies. The orthodox codes and practices of Brāhmaṇism protected and pronounced for centuries by *rishis* (sages), *sādhus* (saints), kings, and *ācāryas* (preceptors)/*gurus* (spiritual teachers/guides/masters/mentors) are conspicuously seen in *Ācārak-kōvai*<sup>2</sup> (lit. ‘The garland of right conducts’), a prominent didactic work comprising 100 *Veṇpās*<sup>3</sup> (one of the four major meters of Tamil prosody), composed by Kayattur Peruvāyīṇ Muḷliyār. This is a peculiar Tamil ethical work that contains evidence of being largely influenced by Sanskrit’s literary works viz. Vedas and *Dharmaśāstras*. The various instructions prescribed in the text are for personal rituals and accurate methods that every individual needs to follow. The present essay attempts to analyze the backdrops, merits and demerits of the Vedic codes and practices put forth by the aforesaid versifier.

### Valour and Virtue: The Unique Attributes of Ancient Tamils

We understand the history, civilization and culture of ancient Tamils – the earliest ethnicity like the Greeks of pre-Heroic age – through *Tolkāppiyam* (c. 250 B.C.), the earliest Tamil grammatical text, and *Eṭṭutogai* and *Pattuppāṭṭu* called ‘**Sangam Literature**’ (c. 250 B.C.–A.D. 200). In the poetries of bygone era, the literatures of *akam*<sup>4</sup> and *puram*<sup>5</sup> themes were equally represented and respected. The manner the love feelings (*akam*, ‘the interior’) of women are depicted in high regard, the non-love feelings and valiant behaviours (*puram*, ‘the exterior’) of men such as valour, dignity, warfare skill and other characteristics like munificence, mourning *etc.* are also held in high esteem in the ancient time. During the monarchical period that followed the age of clan/tribal society, the ruling power solely rested with chieftains/kings. The rulers then were hugely attracted and fascinated towards land, wealth and women. So, there were countless wars/battles frequently among the great Tamil monarchs *viz.* Cēra, Cōla and Pāṇḍiya, and several chieftains due to the undue interest and importance shown towards the aforesaid three attractions. Due to the frequent invasions, wars/battles, plentiful lands became barren, thriving cities and forts devastated beyond repairing, bountiful water resources turned tightfisted, abundant wealth got looted, beautiful women held abducted and abused, defeated kings and their subjects ended as slaves. The adverse attributes such as self-centeredness, egoism, arrogance, prowling, and what not, indeed made the kings and chieftains turn oppressors/tyrants/dictators. These rulers quite often caused a grave injustice to the subjects of their opponents and their own people as well. Hence, the prodigious poets valuing high every human being’s welfare had rendered a volley of poems then in the quest of correcting the erring rulers. The sovereigns by and large paid heed to their advice, at times even to their reprimands. However, there is no

tangible or notable progress in the realm of ruling. Having become fatigued of habitually invading their opponents now and then, the emperors hailed from the great three Tamil dynasties viz. Cēra, Cōla and Pāṇḍiya, started losing their high esteem and became weakened by the end of A.D. 300. Kalabhras, originally a dynasty belonging to Andhra Pradesh, had shrewdly exploited the deplorable socio-political situation to their benefit. These kings, staunch followers of Jainism who entered Tamil Nadu through Karnataka had ruled the country for nearly three hundred years *i.e.* from c. A.D. 300–600. Well before the advent of Kalabhras, the Aryans had already entered the Dravidian land and established their stronghold over the Tamils. The impact of the Aryan's Vedic religion was tangible on Tamils to some extent, however not domineering or overriding the latter's religious sentiments.

During the reigning period of the great three Tamil emperors, *Naḍukal Valipāḍu* (Erected Stone Worship), a distinctive culture of the heroic tradition of the ancient Tamils, was very much in vogue, held in high esteem in memory of the valiant heroes who became martyrs while fighting bravely in wars/battles. Worshipping the Gods/Goddesses of 'Great Tradition' did not have its footprint profoundly at that time. Deities were schemed as a constituent in the subjects of the fourteen background elements or native elements called *Karupporulgal* as depicted in the Sangam *Akam* poems. There was no notion of 'The Creator–Created' existed then. Hence no nexus was found between the God and Tamil humanity in the realm of religious faith. As no powerful Tamil king existed then to protect the legacy of Tamils' in the bleak situation of the post-Sangam period, the Tamils witnessed recession and apparently suffered in all respects. Even mere existing traditionally became a colossal challenge to the people. Subsequently, their culture, arts and literature, philosophy, values *etc.* have been blacked out. The tenets and ceremonies of Jainism

and Buddhism backed by the rulers, the Vedic codes and practices propped by higher communities were vehemently forced upon the common people. Consequently, the attributes held in high regard in the 'Heroic Age' (c. 3000 B.C.–A.D. 300) such as valour, honour/dignity, munificence *etc.*, have been scantily regarded. The doctrines of Jainism, Buddhism and Vedic Hinduism spearheaded by the rulers and influential people were rendered as virtues, duties and responsibilities to be upheld by common man. Apparently, whatsoever ethics/ethos preached so far indeed seemed to be an exercise of higher communities to establish their grip and command over others. In the caste ridden India, especially Tamil Nadu context, upper class evidently refers to the erstwhile kings, ministers, priests, *brāhmiṇs*, *vellālas*, *mudaliyārs*, *vaishyas*, learned men, poets and *et al.* Evidently, socially and economically weaker section folks such as *vēḍar* (hunters), *pāṇar* (minstrels), *paḷḷar* (a bonded labour community attached to farmland), *paraiyar* (drummers), *pulaiyar* (scavengers), *paradavar* (fisher-men), women *et al.* have become subjects to be oppressed. Though the virtues, ethos, duties, *etc.* are meant for everyone yet actually meant for the suppressed classes mentioned above. In the ancient society rules and regulations are not equally executed for everyone. For instance, before the advent of British – the kings, priests, and *brāhmiṇs* were partially or totally exempted from paying land and house taxes. Also these communities did enjoy some immunity from rigorous punishments even for their vigorous crimes.

All through history, the endorsement of the so called 'virtues' or 'ethics' is, in fact, nothing but the candid injunctions protecting the interest of feudal system thereby suppressing the interests of marginalized communities or disregarded classes. Since ages they are prevailing as sanctions rendered by dominants onto their underlings. The virtues/ethics are not just rulings/diktats. These



decrees, in fact, have been playing a vital role in establishing the ‘superb social regulations’ profoundly as ‘the perfect societal rulings’ meant wholly for public wherein the hierarchal positions (top versus bottom) of privileged and underprivileged are tactfully justified and legitimized. The ethics shrewdly validate the age-old social setup by claiming that the existing system is good for everyone. While diplomatically putting forth the views strongly for maintaining the *status quo* they discreetly resist any sort of unrest among the people affected. In due course of time, the ethics of elitists become standardized and institutionalized. Thus the moral codes accomplish the protection by stating them as natural laws, virtuous codes for each and everybody. The powerful dominant society punishes its people, particularly the weaker sections, by branding them as ‘eccentricities’, ‘mentally disordered’, and ‘potential threats to the benevolent society’ if they cross the line of moral codes endorsed by them. “In the history of mankind, it is mostly the marginalized folks who are being subjected to several kinds of physical punishments and mental tortures for centuries” (Raj Gauthaman 1997: 7). This is a kind of interpretation attributed to the so-called ‘virtues’/‘ethics’ (moral codes-duties-rights) authorized by the society’s prevailing class.

### **Ethical Codes and Practices in Inner and Outer Spheres**

Any society is essentially built upon certain binary oppositions *viz.* good X bad, higher X lower, scholar X stupid, noble X ignoble, lord X slave, sweetness X bitterness, white X black and so on. Here we could perceive that the entities placed on the left side and right side respectively denote definite virtuous and wicked properties. Nonetheless, not one and all might accept and respect the existence of such properties as just right. We could understand the reason behind the rejection because these binary chattels are being endorsed from the standpoint of traditionalists who

emphasize all sorts of ethics to the society. It is obvious that the folks subjected to oppression for ages would naturally have a different viewpoint in this regard. *Tirukkuraḷ* too very clearly illustrates all kinds of ethics and duties for everyone – from mighty kings to ordinary folks – and their rights as well and also the rasping operation of aforesaid binary oppositions in the society. We realize that whatever the moral values and ethical obligations exhorted in *Tirukkuraḷ*, ‘the *ulagap podumaṇrai*’ (The Universal Scripture), have been seemingly reminisced either sparingly or elaborately in other Tamil ethical works such as *Nāḷaḍiyār*, *Paḷamolī Nāṇūru*, *Nāṇmaṇikkaḍigai*, *Cīrupaṇcamūlam*, *Tirikaḍugam*, *Ēlādi etc.* In such deliberations, we notice a huge influence or heavy dose of tenets and moral codes put forth by Jainism and Buddhism. Contrary to these heterogeneous thoughts, the *Ācārakkōvai* (*ĀK*) so diligently had exhorted almost all moral values, ethical codes and practices endorsed by the Vedic Hinduism in its 100 verses.

The ethical codes and practices of Hinduism that are supposed to be strictly followed in the day to day life – from waking phase to sleeping stage – by the first three *varṇas*<sup>6</sup> (*Brāhmins*, *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas*) are very systematically divulged in this peculiar work. And the ethical composition has cited certain austere observances to be firmly adhered to and some irreverent adherences not to be ever observed by the men of three *varṇas* in their ‘inner’ (home) and ‘outer’ (public) spheres which would guarantee ‘salvation’ after the worldly life. While the austere and contemptuous observances related to waking, bathing, worshipping, eating, sleeping and so on that one needs to adhere to in his/her ‘inner sphere’ are insisted upon in the early part of the work, other adherences such as walking, studying, listening, speaking, behaving, and so on that one needs to conduct himself/herself in the ‘outer spheres’ viz. royal palace/royal court, assem-

bly of the learned, council of elders, school/institution, and so on are pressed in the later part of the book. The prominent people – who have strong stake in land, religion, politics, education, *etc.* – especially kings and priests/*brāhmins* are the protagonists mostly referred to in this ethical volume. Others such as women and labourers who sweat hard and toil more in homes, lands, mountains and forests do not find place in the didactic composition. The age-old fortress of the Brāhmaṇism called the ‘concept of purity’ built upon the basement *viz.* ‘holy X profanity’, ‘clean X pollution’ has been interspersed profoundly in every verse of the ethical work. It is not wise to say that there exist scientific values or real-world veracities to the orthodox codes and practices uttered in the ethical works in general, *Ācārakkōvai* in particular. We could realize that the so-called remarkable precept of Hinduism *viz.* ‘*svarg*’–‘*narak*’ (‘heaven’–‘hell’) philosophy, built upon the foundation of ‘goodness X wickedness’ is dynamically functioning as the basis for whole lot of orthodox codes and practices.

### **Between King and Citizens: The Relationships/Interactions**

When the conception of ‘right to hold property’ emerged in the bygone era, inevitably there arose countless violent events between the divergent Tamil clans who dwelt on mountains, forests, cultivable plain lands, seacoasts and deserts (wastelands). The mightiest man among them was duly acknowledged as the lord/king of their clan. Eventually, the king got bestowed ‘the ultimate power’ sooner in order to streamline/control the barbarous activities of his people. The final period of the rough and tough attitudes of clan culture is termed ‘Heroic Age’ (*c.* 3000 B.C.–A.D. 300) in the scheme of periodization.

‘It is said that the ruling institution called ‘the government’, indeed, came into existence in this period’ (Raj Gauthaman, *Ibid.*,

p. 197). The lord of the clan who got conferred colossal powers was later known as *arasaṇ* (king), *kō* (king), *maṇṇaṇ* (king), *vēndaṇ* (king/monarch), and *irai* (lord). He alone was entitled to act as the unanimous leader or lord of his people. The lord was expected to be prodigious in education, knowledge and action besides an exceptional man conducting himself excellently in the spheres of mind, speech and deed. His action of mighty physique was hailed as *āṇmai* (prowess)/*vīram* (valour)/*maṇram* (bravery). His deeds of compassion were greeted as *māṇbu* (honour)/*īgai* (benevolence)/*aṇam* (virtue). These two royal qualities (prowess and benevolence) were considered as the two eyes of the king. “All works are agreed that the first and foremost duty of the king is the protection of his subjects. *Śāntiparva* (68. 1-4) notes that all the seven expounders of polity (*rajaśāstra*praṇetārah) named by it extol protection as the highest *dharma* of the king. Manu (VII. 144) states that the protection of subjects is the highest *dharma* and Kālidāsa in *Raghuvamśa* 14.67 alludes this dictum of Manu. Protection consists in punishing internal aggression (such as by thieves and robbers and by persons who invade a man’s rights) and in meeting external aggression” (Kane 1946: 56). And, “Gauthama (X. 7–8) prescribes that the special responsibility of the king is to protect all beings, to award just punishment and that he has to protect the several *varṇas* and *āśramas* according to the rules of *śāstra* and to bring them round to the path of their proper duties when they swerve from it (XI. 9-10)”, (Kane, *Ibid.*). Nevertheless, this sort of notion on king is not seen with such attributes even scarcely in *Ācārakkōvai* but denoted with some other qualities. The king is just referred in this work as ‘*arasaṇ*’ (*ĀK* 16), ‘*iraivaṇ*’ (*ĀK* 78).

In this ethical work, several attributes related to God and Temple have been clearly equated with king and palace. The royal court or the royal palace is reverently referred as “*Kōvil* > *Kōyil*”

(< *Kō* = King + *Il* = Residence *i.e.* Palace) which predominantly meant “temple” till the advent of British. Since the royal home of king too has the same supreme power of protecting or destroying people and the sanctity bestowed upon it, the dwelling place of monarch is equated with the “temple”. Similarly, just as devotees reverently worship their God while placing the Almighty in the supreme plane at temple, the people of country too just keep their king at the highest pedestal bestowing him with the sovereign powers and respect him with fear and awe, as mentioned the *Ācārakkōvai*. The supreme reigning power is just akin to the fire – when someone goes so near/interacts so closely with this ‘live wire’ then he/she instantly or sooner will be burnt/eliminated due to his/her fault. When people talk to/deal with the king, the supreme power house, they need to be extra mindful and be ever alert. Because, whatever entities function in such domain of the ultimate authority, naturally do possess the devastating characteristics of the fire. So, “no one should get angry even when an ordinary soldier stops him/her at the gate of royal court from entering” (*ĀK* 66), thus cautions the didactic text. Why because, the anger of a devotee/person can have no effect on the God/the Lord, even to the person who enjoys ‘the blessings’ of the ultimate power. Rather, the fury of the person would invite him the misery. Anyone who goes to the temple seeking the ‘Grace of the Almighty’, generally, is expected not to go with high decoration than the God. Similarly, “someone paying a visit to the king should not go wearing more extravagant dresses and extra ornamentation than the monarch” (*Ibid.*). “No one should spend more amount of money for carrying out any activity like charity, conducting wedding, indulging in business, constructing house and so on than the king though a person is so rich possessing enormous wealth. If anyone violates this ethos then his wealth would vanish in no time”, thus warns another verse (*ĀK* 85). It is

believed that constructing house taller than temple is a sinful act. Also no one should celebrate any of his family functions with more grandeur than the temple festivals. Showing disregard to this ethics is nothing but an evil act. Usually, no devotee goes to temple with empty hand. It is considered a sacrilegious act. So, everyone earnestly carries a bunch of flowers, fruits, coconuts, camphor *etc.* as items for ritualistic worship to invoke the God for His Grace. Similarly, “while visiting the king too, the people ought to take whatever gift is possible along with them that merits their social status and economic condition. This is indeed an ethical act endorsed by elders” (*ĀK* 66). In the temple no *bhakta* should exercise excessive liberty while praying to the God. He/she should not stand in front facing God. Instead standing aside gently, the person should reverently place his worries while worshipping. It is exactly in this manner, “without taking more liberty” (*ĀK* 66), and “not uttering any words of pride over one’s achievement in education, earned wealth, and fine characteristics, and more notably not elucidating anything unnecessarily” (*ĀK* 71) the citizen ought to convey his state of thought quietly, and in short to the king. “Whatsoever may be his grievances worse yet the person should not express it to the king when he is standing alone in a place. Though the matter would fetch gains yet the person should not voluntarily convey the problem to the king” (*ĀK* 69), thus further adds the text.

The king always expects his subjects to behave with discipline, dignity, and responsibility. Hence, the *Ācārakkōvai* insists that “people must stay away from doing certain things such as spitting, sitting on larger chair, chewing betel leaves with areca nut, expressing unentitled matters, and sleeping in front of the king” (*ĀK* 70). Further it adds, “the people ought to avoid also laughing, yawning, and sneezing. Otherwise, they would stay as blasphemy forever” (*ĀK* 73). Besides these odd behaviours, the

following errant actions of people such as “going in the middle of royal court and taking a seat next to someone where the king was also present” (*ĀK* 66), and “engaged in surreptitious talk with someone” (*ĀK* 78) were also considered disgraceful acts. Furthermore, “standing closely with the king in the royal court, and eavesdropping of the king’s conversation with someone” were considered very serious outrageous acts. “When such situation arises, the person should behave as if he is looking for something there” (*ĀK* 78). Everyone ought to concentrate only on his matters, not on others’ business. Else such kinds of actions would be construed having ulterior motives/hidden intentions. As any act of deceit and conspiracy could exterminate the precious life of the king in a fraction of seconds, even a little movement of a person would be very intensely observed by the king as well as his bodyguards. So, everyone needs to amend his body language and words according to the temperament of the king. “Though it is absolutely wrong when the king says that the colour of crow is white yet no one should disagree with him” (*ĀK* 69), so says another verse from the ethical text (*ĀK* 69). With the references quoted so far, we understand the prescription of the pivotal point which hails the king as the sole supreme power just on a par with God in all respects.

### Etiquette and Ethos of Nobles

The essential attributes of prowess/manhood, especially the *vīram* (valour) and *māṇam* (honour) that prevailed during the Heroic Age witnessed altogether a shift in the Didactic literary period. No word either on heroism or heroic kings were mentioned in the *Ācārakkōvai*. The didactic work just candidly puts forth the phenomenal attributes of kings, *brāhmiṇs*, landlords and traders as the fine ethical codes and practices adhered by great men. Needless to say, the orthodox codes and practices are numerous.

However, the *ĀK* (verse 1) considers the following eight moral activities as the seed or root of the traditional ethical codes and practices. They are: “1) Gratefulness, 2) Patience, 3) Uttering nice words, 4) Doing no harm to any being, 5) Education, 6) Benevolence, 7) Wisdom, 8) Friendship with noble men. People’s usual dressing sense, walking style or mental attitude, and even some negative traits such as disregarding one’s own promised words and scolding others too could signify their ethical culture which got materialized on the basis of their qualification, education, prowess/manliness, and family lineage” (*ĀK* 49).

Perhaps, in the society of agrarian civilization where individual earned the right of holding property – the nobles, great men and prodigious people, who then represented a small population – might have led the life of self-control and discipline. At times, they could have led a dignified life. However, expecting everyone to behave exactly in the same manner is impractical, rather atypical. In fact, during the post-Sangam period, the term ‘education’ candidly meant ‘the knowledge acquired from Vedas’; the word ‘scholar’ apparently referred to ‘the person who mastered the Vedas’. In the ancient time, ‘living pious life to the tenets exhorted in four Vedas’ was acknowledged as ‘ethics’ or ‘morality’. Conducting the sacrament customs such as *yajña*, *mantra* and *tantra* in the quest of propitiating Gods or for the prosperity of rulers were considered ethics in those days. It is only ‘the priests’/‘*brāhmiṇs*’ who excelled in the realms of ‘education-wisdom-ethics’ were duly recognized as ‘the great men’ or ‘the prodigious people’. As these ‘priests’/‘*brāhmiṇs*’ are considered possessing ‘the pure ethics’, the *Ācārakkōvai* insists that “the world should greet them wholeheartedly by keeping them on par with their parents on their head” (*ĀK* 61). The ethical text *ĀK* further insists, “when the *brāhmiṇs* are on the pathway, others ought to give way by getting aside. Only such fine people are



blessed and would be revered by one and all in their every birth” (*ĀK* 64). Since the *brāhmiṇs* were believed to be ‘the pious people’, even their ordinary utterings were revered as amazing powerful maxims. Therefore, “astute men never consult any *pulaiya* (untouchable) while planning to do a noble deed. But they always consult the impeccable *brāhmiṇs* and act accordingly to their suggestions as their dictums would never fail” (*ĀK* 92), thus resolutely pronounces the versifier Peruvāyiṇ Muḷḷiyār. We could realize here the forceful functioning of the notion – which is ordinarily found in the scheme of hierarchal system – viz. “higher X lower” is deliberated very perceptively on its own terms. How far is this view flawless? Alas! We are, indeed, clueless!

The physical world wherein we live is the ultimate product of *pañca bhūtas* (Five Elements of Nature) such as earth, water, fire, wind and ether (Space). Numerous beings of different categories are born, evolve, live and perish in mountains, forests, plain cultivable lands, and seacoast regions since evolution. Out of all creatures, it is only the human beings living everywhere worship these *pañca bhūtas* either out of fear or *bhakti* (devotion). Along with these, “man of wisdom should adore *brāhmiṇs*, cow, moon and sun like his own body” (*ĀK* 15), thus endorses the treatise. “Or else, the Gods of *pañca bhūtas* dwelling in his body would leave him to suffer forever” (*Ibid.*), so warns the book. Nevertheless, we are unable to understand how the *brāhmiṇs* and cows also could hold such amazing colossal powers on a par with the *pañca bhūtas*, the moon and the sun. Also how did they get grouped along with the elements of nature on a high pedestal? A verse in the ethical volume expresses that the *brāhmiṇs* – “the men of wisdom do possess divinity. Hence, when people happen to see them, they should stand up promptly and should fall at their feet sincerely. When these men of divinity greet them by saying “Good”, then only people fallen at their feet should stand up. The

above-mentioned three attributes are, in fact, the essence of ethical codes” (*ĀK* 62). Another verse states, “the ‘*tiraṅkaṇḍār*’ (‘the erudite people’) always adore ascetics” (*ĀK* 63). “The ‘*aruṅ-kēḷiyavar*’, ‘the men of wisdom’ (mostly *brāhmiṇs*, and other ‘learned and prodigious people’) while present in the middle of a council neither disparage nor insult anyone; do not sleep in the middle of many people; would not hide themselves in a corner after having accepted a task to discharge yet unsuccessful in their attempt; they don’t scorn anyone those who are absent in the gathering” (*ĀK* 50), thus another verse canvasses the image of great men in high esteem. The implication behind this sketching is two-fold. The didactic work on the one hand asserts that ‘the *brāhmiṇs* happened to be the nobles’ customarily, while ‘the lower strata people, mostly the untouchables, the ignoble people’ on the other hand. The Vedic Hinduism keeping its very notion of purity on a high pedestal, in a way, discreetly mocks the underprivileged as the people of not having any qualm to sleep in the middle of the crowd, dishonest to their own statements, and very much ill-mannered. Contrary to this reading, the orthodox creed acclaims that “the ‘*aiyamil kāṭciyavar*’ (lit. ‘the visionaries of doubtless mind’, ‘the men of acumen’ *i.e.* the *brāhmiṇs* and other great men) in front of the elders wouldn’t speak imprudently by pointing their finger/hand at something against them; wouldn’t scribe anything by their foot; wouldn’t compare critically a person not present with someone sitting in the gathering; would not take anything in the sitting posture when noble/elderly people offer something to them” (*ĀK* 94). “These ‘*tiraṅkaṇḍār*’ (the erudite people) feel bashful for such disgraceful acts” (*ĀK* 63); “they wouldn’t make any excessive gesticulation; wouldn’t walk dropping any dirt; wouldn’t speak harsh words in the council of the learned; even wouldn’t go to the place where two persons are engaged in conversation” (*ĀK* 93). Yet in another verse the ethi-

cal text states, the ‘*asaiyāda ullattavar*’, (lit. ‘the men of unwavering mind’), the burgess men from higher class would not utter – any deceitful word, useless term, any word in impertinent way or disrespectful manner, and disparage words – and also they wouldn’t indulge in backbiting” (*ĀK* 52).

The *Ācārakkōvai* further adds, ‘the *nerippaṭṭavar*’ (lit. ‘the people adhering to tradition’) the people of higher principles, not only in the councils/assemblies even in other places too would act or behave with sheer poise and total dedication”. “These people – don’t throw any item, or a stone; neighing and calling someone out loudly who is away at distance. They don’t deride anyone – don’t get angry over others, don’t hide themselves, don’t clap their hands, don’t wink their eyes at someone, or move their nose to sides” (*ĀK* 53). “As these ‘*kaḍaṇari kāṭciyavar*’ (lit. ‘the visionaries well versed in customs’), the people of excellent traits highly honour the notion of ‘purity’/‘veneration’, they *don’t* walk in between two lights and two people; *don’t* spit on walls. Even at their worst suffering times, they *don’t* wear other’s dirty clothes either to garb the lower part or to cover the upper part of their body respectively. And they *don’t* take off their dress when happening to be in the middle of public place. Even they are very cautious enough that the smell of their dress does not reach or cause others to feel sick” (*ĀK* 36), so *Ācārakkōvai* renders more details about the fine qualities of pious people in a verse. In the similar vein yet in different tone, another verse too asserts these facts as follows. “One *should not* untie his dress in public; *should not* scratch his ear; *should not* speak raising his hand; *should not* look at women; *should not* eavesdrop while a person is sharing a secret with another” (*ĀK* 75). Here, we could notice that more or less the same facts are divulged in the above mentioned two verses 36 and 75, however, in two kinds of tenor. According to

the versifier Peruvāyīṇ Muḷliyār, all these traits are not the conducts of cultured ones.

Generally, great men, especially the *brāhmiṇs* – who evolve against the backdrop of ‘education-ethics-wisdom’ disciplines and serve on those platforms – do naturally possess the feeling of fear or apprehension. Needless to say, their apprehension contains the fear over their own life, belongings (such as cattle, land, buildings, money, jewelry *etc.*), honour/dignity. Hence, “these ‘*nigaril ariviṇār*’ (lit. ‘the unparalleled knowledgeable people’), the excellent learned men don’t stay for a long time at the dangerous battle ground, toddy/arrack shops where drunkards lay down after losing their consciousness, slum of whores, the place where once friends turned thence foes assembled, and flight of steps leading to water from the bank of a river, pond, *etc.*” (*ĀK* 55). We could seemingly grasp the state of hazards lurking at the above mentioned places. In the places like battlefield and toddy shop, an insurgence/a riot may erupt at any time over some reason or other. As these learned men obviously could not face such dangerous situations by their physical strength, probably they tend to leave the spots as soon as possible. Although these people are acclaimed to be mentally strong yet they would possibly lose their psychosomatic strength once they stay for long in the deplorable sites such as toddy shops and brothel areas. Though they could serve in those dreadful spots with committed mental firmness yet their integrity will be suspected. Thereby they would be termed as ‘men of immorality’ or ‘impropriety’. So, in every sense leaving such places well before the right time is virtually good for the well-educated men. It is because of this knowledge, “these wise men ‘don’t stay in the region where well-dried up grasses are overgrown; don’t put them into fire” (*ĀK* 56). The reason behind this, perhaps, could be the vulnerabilities arising from the poisonous reptiles like scorpion, snake *etc.* and also the potential

risk from the wild fire. The sensible people also “don’t go into the forest alone” (*Ibid.*). Because, possibly they could be attacked and killed at times by wild animals such as lion, tiger, cheetah, bear, *etc.*

Apparently, the prudent people are aware of all these hazards. These astute people furthermore “don’t run fast with wide steps in rains” (*Ibid.*), as they possibly end up with fractures by falling down on the ground. Obviously these people don’t risk their life by indulging in any sort of daring activities. These sagacious people utterly believe the notions related to the subjects such as God, celestials, *bhūtas*, *puṇyas*, *pāpas* *etc.* expressed in the Vedas. So, “they don’t stay alone in the places like ruined house, temple, graveyard, and under the lone dried up tree withering in the dilapidated open space” (*ĀK* 57). They strongly believe that the evil spirits like *bhūtas* and ghosts do exist in such broken-down places and would harm them. So perceptively they avoid staying alone in such places. Yet we are clueless, how the temple, the divine abode of God, too was placed alongside the abandoned house, dreadful graveyard, and the barren tree, in the list of uninhabited places. It is construed that violating this adherence is nothing but an act of *pāp* (sin). Therefore, “even at the worst situation of poverty, these people don’t deviate from their community lineage which strikingly adores such ethical codes and practices. Rather, they strictly follow those moral principles at any cost in their day to day lives too” (*ĀK* 56). For instance, “they don’t sleep even for a little interval during the day times even though they feel utter tiredness, if they wish to stay away from diseases” (*ĀK* 57). It is their customary belief that the inauspicious act would hand down diseases to them and *darittiram* (utter poverty or absolute destitution) as well.

Naturally, other people too would wish to achieve excellence in life like the great elders principled and matured with wisdom

who had reached a superior level. For this accomplishment, “the ordinary men while accompanying the elders should not go sitting (on the mount of horse, elephant *etc.*) in a vehicle; besides they should not go wearing footwear and holding umbrella to save them from the scorching sun” (*ĀK* 60). It is believed that the wrath of great elders principled and matured with wisdom is akin to that of Gods. So as to stay away from the elders’ wrath, “the other men should give way to the people carrying luggage, patients, elders, children, cows, women above and beyond they must give path way to *brāhmiṇs* and *tapasis* (Ascetics) if they really wish to accomplish the good fortune” (*ĀK* 64). “A person who wishes to greet such great elders in the quest of seeking their blessings should not walk into the middle of processions and venerate/worship at royal palaces and temples respectively where king and gods do rounds” (*ĀK* 72). Violating this ethics is considered sheer foolishness. Because the aforementioned respectful public places had assumed to have contained ‘the purity’ as well as ‘supreme power’ together. So the serenity of these reverend sites should not lose their sanctity at the cost of someone’s excitement cum troubling activities. In order to safeguard the sanctity of the above mentioned abodes, the sensible man should pay his respect to elders/great men from the very location wherever he is standing away. Nevertheless, this act cannot be construed as disregard. However, “in other locations, be it even forest, one should not sit haughtily, or cross-legged when elders are present there. Besides, the person must not sleep covering his body with a blanket without extending the same gesture to the elders well before hand. Negating this culture is indeed presumed as perimeter of contempt” (*ĀK* 91). Further the *Ācārakkōvai* cautions that no one should disregard elderly people perceiving them as aged and can’t do any harm to him/her. It reasons out, “if a person dishonours the following four entities – a snake alive in anthill,

king, fire, and a lion living in cave – taking them as tender, docile and friendly, then misery will occur” (*ĀK* 84). So a person needs to be ever conscious and act responsibly in his/her life, if he/she wishes to lead a good life devoid of moral consequences of vicious deeds.

### Teachers and Pupils: Interaction/Relationship

“*Māta-Pita-Guru-Deyvam*” (Mother-Father-Teacher-God) – thus Sanskrit tradition essays the line of veneration in descending order. “*Aṇṇaiyum pitāṁ munṇarī deyvam*” (Mother and father are the earliest known gods), so says poetess Avvaiyār in her ethical work *Koṇrai Vēdan*<sup>7</sup> similarly yet with a little difference. Apparently, every society, of all the kith and kin, gives the prime importance or primary respect to ‘mothers’. But the ethical text *Ācārakkōvai* strikingly renders the adorable group in a different manner as follows. “One should venerate the incomparable mentors *viz.* king, teacher, mother, father, and elder brother *like the way one worships the celestials/gods*” (*ĀK* 16). In this line of adoration, it is to be noted that prime importance is given to ‘king’ followed by ‘teacher’ who was placed well before ‘the mother’, the universally most valued and lovable person. Then positioned are one’s father and elder brother in the fourth and fifth places respectively. Apparently, the didactic work places the ‘king’ in the highest pedestal. Perhaps, the unquestionable supreme might of king and the vital intellect of teacher witnessed in the heroic period could have compelled the author to place the monarch well before one’s own mother and father. It is to be realized that the worship of God is, in fact, implicitly placed (through the terms “*like the way one worships the celestials/gods*”) at the very first place well before all others. Strangely somehow ‘the elder brother’, a senior sibling of a person, also gets into the list of veneration line. Otherwise, ‘mother and

father', the highly esteemed endearing figures were not given due importance in the ethical composition. Nonetheless, *m̐rāl*, the mother has been just mentioned in another context in the verse (*ĀK* 65).

'Man is a social being', as has been often mentioned by sociologists elsewhere. It is quite natural that human beings also do inherit some typical qualities of animals to some extent. Humans allegedly had remained barbaric for several hundred of centuries since evolution. In due course of time, they started to shed the animalistic qualities especially the sense of the brute. Subsequently, they have become domesticated and civilized in the days then followed. Consequently, they started framing certain norms, rules and regulations in the quest of interacting and maintaining bond with kith and kin viz. mother, father, brother, sister, aunt, uncle *et al.* During the period of civilization, there also emerged nitty-gritty of sanctions and restrictions related to man's sexual life. While the man has been allowed to have the physical relationship with grown up females in general, yet he has been regulated not to have the same liaison with certain women closely connected to him by blood by citing some ethical codes and practices as taboos. Though such taboos are not exactly identical in all ethnicities, yet no culture sanctions the man to have sexual relationship either with his mother, or sister, or daughter. Incongruously, bringing colossal damage to the prevailing culture, certain unethical activities allied to physical intercourse have arisen among the human beings out of animal instincts at times. To stay away from such bizarre and illegitimate actions, the *Ācārakkōvai* forbids 'man from residing with any woman who is alone at a house/home, be she is his own mother, or sister or daughter' (*ĀK* 65). Why because, the ID (sensual impulses and desire) is practically uncontrollable in certain given situations for some people who are rationally weak. Those situations would



obviously make them become victims of circumstances either apprehensively or willfully. Except in this verse, mother or father or any kith was not referred in any other verse. Why so? It is interesting for our speculation. More than the references (something or other directly) made on kings and *brāhmiṇs*, the overwhelmingly mentioned people are “the excelled men who adhered to orthodox codes and principles”. The people of this category are admired as ‘*āynda ariviṇar*’ (lit. ‘the intellectuals who explored subjects’), ‘the erudite men of wisdom’, ‘*āṇṇravinda mūṭta viḷumiyār*’, ‘the wise and self-possessed elderly excellent men’, ‘*cevvīyār*’, ‘the nobles’, *etc.* Needless to say, these people could possibly be none other than the *brāhmiṇs* well-versed in Vedas who firmly follow the orthodox ethos.

The only other category of men finding place in this pious lot is ‘*upāddiyāyār*’ (< Skt. *upādhyāy* means ‘teacher’ in general, ‘spiritual preceptor’ in particular). The teachers, who are also known by other names such as ‘*ācārya*’, ‘*guru*’, ‘*upādhyāy*’, happened to be mostly the *brāhmiṇs* in the socio-history of India. Since the Vedic Age (c. 1500–500 B.C.) till the days of colonial period, ‘education’ in India conspicuously meant ‘the knowledge of Vedas’. Those who taught the Vedas then were duly recognized as ‘gods’. In the above mentioned period, except the *shūdras*, the people from three *varṇas* (*brāhmiṇs*, *kshatriyas*, and *vaishyas*) did acquire the Vedic education by leaving their homes and living with their *guru* (teacher) for a few years. Though the main focus was on Vedic education yet the *śiṣhyas* (pupils) were taught several subjects and divergent disciplines. They were also trained in kinds of fine arts and martial arts. It is said that the students then gradually progress into a complete manhood when they come out of the *gurukul*.<sup>8</sup> So, apparently, the pupils did respect their *gurus* reverentially by keeping them on a par with the Almighty. The students did also show utmost modesty

towards their masters; rendered whatsoever sacrifices required for their masters' comfort. Needless to say, the relation-ship that prevailed between the *guru* and his pupils during those times was similar to that between the God and the devotees; king and his subjects. There are a quite number of instances in *Ācārakkōvai* which clearly corroborate the above statement. "A virtuous student should stand in front of the teacher with modesty. He should not leave the place before hearing the word 'go' from the teacher. When the teacher engages the class, the student should be more attentive by lending his ears completely. While the teacher does not reply to his query whatsoever, the pupil then should not ask again", thus *ĀK* outlines the virtues to be adhered by students in the class rooms. As students are young lads, unable to read the actual situation of circumstances, they may convey something to the teacher out of context at times. Besides, there is every chance that students might be nervous and fumble to express something coherently out of fear. Nonetheless, it is quite natural. To save oneself from such unpleasant situations, *ĀK* prescribes, "a student while expressing something to the teacher concerned should not be in a hurry; should not repeat over and again the same thing; should not utter lies by stretching but should convey whatever matter precisely in appropriate situation" (*ĀK* 76).

In the bye gone era, *gurus* did not take any fee from their *shisyas* for imparting education. However, the pupils before leaving their *āshrams* used to offer the *guru dakshina*, (the token fee paid to a spiritual preceptor), a traditional gesture of acknowledgement, respect and thanks to the *guru*, whatsoever possible to their ability. In those days, the academic activity called 'Learning' was like conducting *yajña* (worship performed with sacrificial fire) where the priest(s) had been suitably awarded '*saṇmānam*' (< *saṇmāṇ* or *sammāṇ*, Skt.), 'the reward' at the end of the successful event. Similarly, pupils gifted something special to

their *gurus* before leaving the *gurukul*, the residential school. This gifting is known as '*gurudakshina*' in Vedic culture. It is an irony that the acclaimed *guru* Droṇāchārya had demanded and got the right hand thumb severed from Ekalavya, a young prince of Nishadha – a confederation of jungle tribes in Ancient India – for the archery tutelage that the erstwhile *guru* indeed had not taught. *Ācārakkōvai*, the earliest Tamil ethical book of *Hindu dharma*, persistently says that 'a pupil should offer the *gurudakshina* with utmost earnest and sheer reverence to *guru*, wholly with no contraction between his mind, words and deeds, in the manner a virtuous person conducts himself engaged with learning, indulging in *tapas* (penance), and conducting the *yajña*' (*ĀK* 3). The ethical text insists that a pupil should conduct himself in the above said manner for his own interest as the academic and non-academic disciplines were taught free by the erudite *guru*. Else, the work warns that the student would suffer with *kēḍu* (misery) forever. "If any one wishes to lead the life constantly with no distress then the person should protect his own body, wife, subject sheltered, and wealth/property the way he safeguards the gold. Otherwise sheer misery would engulf him" (*ĀK* 95), thus a caution meant for everyone is spelt out in its verse. 'Warning'/ 'Cautioning' with dire consequences is a trademark feature of all ethical works. Though the *Ācārakkōvai* follows this sincerely yet it employs a juxtaposed strategy *i.e.* "if you do/observe this, you will reap this benefit" to encourage people for following certain Vedic codes and practices in their day today lives as entrepreneurs do invite investment from public and quoting the prospective profit in return on such endeavour in their business. It assures the people that they would obtain all the fruits of the tree called '*aisvaryam*' (opulence) if they adhere honestly to the Vedic *dharma*s cited. "The one who observes all the *dharma*s mentioned in the *Dharmaśāstras* with firm and total commitment would gain

wealth and will be handsome or fine-looking in this birth. Also, he would become a landlord and learned man. His words would be respected by one and all. Besides, the person would live long without disease in this world” (*ĀK* 2). The didactic work guarantees the people whoever observe sincerely the ‘dharmic life’ that they would be blessed ones not only in their present birth but also would remain so that they would be born in *narkuḍi* (noble family/clan) in the forthcoming births.

### Orthodox Codes and Practices to be Adhered

Everyone does not have the same kind of life. Apparently, the reasons behind this are numerous. The socio-political-religious environmental backdrops wherein a person is born and grows at a place and time essentially determine one’s present as well as future life. On these bases only – a person’s civilization, culture, and thought are fundamentally built.

In the post-Sangam age, the heterogeneous religions *viz.* Buddhism and Jainism on the one hand and the Vedic religion named Hinduism on the other, have interpreted human’s life differently as per their own doctrines. So they prescribed dissimilar codes and practices to mankind. “The world, the life, youthfulness, wealth, body *etc.* are naturally impermanent. They are bound to fall off/to become extinct. So man should not develop desire over them. Rather, he should evolve as a fine human being with austerity. At the end, his journey into the world should be free by renunciation and abandonment of all worldly pleasures. That is the blissful state called ‘*Nirvāṇa*’ to be attained by ‘*Kevala Jñāna*’ (Realization/Enlightenment).<sup>9</sup> For accomplishing this highest state, every human being should strive hard by austere means”, thus outlines Jainism. In its scheme **there exists no ‘Godhead’ or the ‘Creator of the Universe’**. But “it believed in the existence of ‘perfect souls’ abiding in the

highest region of the world with fully developed consciousness. It gave much importance to *karma* theory. To escape from the bondage of birth and death, it advocated that the *jiva* should control his sense of material life and develop spiritualized austere life” (Rajagopal 2007: 151). In a similar vein yet with difference, **Buddha** (‘The Enlightened One’, 563-480 B.C.), who out rightly rejected the notion of God like his predecessor **Mahavīra** (‘The Great Warrior’, 599-527 B.C.), preached his gospel and termed it *Nirvāṇa* (Liberation). As the Bodhi, he put it, **“the desire for personal gratification was the root cause of all sorrows in the world and that the only way to end sorrow was to extinguish all selfish desires”** (*Ibid.*, p. 150). Whereas the Vedic Hinduism strongly believed and propagated that **“human welfare and even the existence of the world depended upon the utter mercy of the deities whose favour could be sought through sacrificial rites and rituals”** (*Ibid.*, p. 151). The much-admired *rishis* of Vedic period like Manu and Bhrigu had expounded that the man can accomplish the delightful state called ‘*mukti*’ forever by sincerely observing all the *dharma*s cited in the Vedic *Śāstras*. All the three creeds had unanimously professed that it is because of the (mis)deeds of a person’s previous birth that he or she is actually coming back to the world once or several times again. Bringing down the curtain to the recurring play of *karma* i.e. the *mukti*, the cessation of birth cycle is possible if the person is conscious enough and strictly follows the ethical codes and practices expounded in Vedas and *Śāstras*. The deeds are classified as *ācāras* (good behaviour/custom) and *aṇācāras* (evil deeds or misdeeds/bad behaviours) by their nature. However, certain *ācāras* had to be observed only by certain castes as expressed as *Varṇāśrama Dharma* in *Dharmaśāstras*. When there is defilement, then the same *ācāras* turn out to be *aṇācāras*. For instance, the *shūdras* and *atishūdras* (untouchables) were not

entitled either to study or listen to Vedas till the advent of the British. If they violate this ethic then their act becomes not only misdeed but a sin. So these marginalized men were cruelly punished, their ears were filled with lead and tongues were severed.

It is firmly believed that when the life/soul leaves the body, the good and bad behaviours of that being also sail along with the soul to the 'Abode of God' or 'Celestials'. Upon their reaching their good and bad deeds are weighed. The cessation of birth cycle or the next probable birth of the beings ranging from one sense to six senses is determined according to the measure of good and bad deeds performed by that particular being. Thus till the clearance of all misfortunes earned during birth(s), all the beings do experience pleasures and pains, of course, in varying degrees. When all the *karmas* get removed, the soul becomes liberated. The soul, according to the Vedic Hinduism, ascending from the lower to the higher *varṇa*, finally merges again with the 'Absolute Being' and becomes a pure soul living in an everlasting blissful condition at the abode of celestials known as *moksha*. They duly reach the state of 'Arihant' (One who has destroyed his inner enemies such as greed, anger, desire, and hatred) or 'Buddhahood' (Enlightenment) respectively in the case of Jainism and Buddhism. Apparently, the goal of all beings is to get rid of the birth and death cycle just in the quest of escaping to the unknown sphere beyond from the dependence of time and place. For this accomplishment, the respective 'religions and their gods' grace are essential. The decree for acquiring this grace is, "all beings should behave like the ideal citizens of the god" (Raj Gauthaman, *Op.cit.*, pp. 91-92).

### **At Mornings – Wake up and Other Activities: 'Ācārams' (Virtuous Acts)**

According to the Vedic *ācāram*, "one should wake up from sleep in the early morning so as to get the grace of God" (*ĀK* 4). Then,

“standing in the cold water with the thinking over the God, one should worship” (*ĀK* 9). “Soon after waking in the early morning, one ought to first pay his respect to his parents by prostrating before them. Only then the person should think of earning wealth in a righteous manner and carry out other virtuous activities of the day” (*ĀK* 4). “One has to worship god in the evening too by sitting position on the ground (worshipping god in standing position is sacrilegious)”, (*ĀK* 9). Perceivably, we notice here the God and God related matters are occupying a significant portion in whatsoever ceremonial observances stated above. Conspicuously, these utterings seemed to be authored by *brāhmiṇs* for the *brāhmiṇs*.

Normally, the manually working class people don’t take bath in the mornings; also they don’t worship god. After working hard the whole day and becoming physically damn tired, the labourers usually take hot water bath in the evening. The bathing culture is in no way ritualistic one related to God or religious observances as found in the case of *brāhmiṇs*. The manual workers, unless and otherwise required, generally don’t bathe during daytime but mostly after the sunset particularly before the dinner. If they become dirtied by sweat, dust, or mud then they go for daytime bathe in wells, ponds, lakes and rivers. While bathing in the above mentioned water resources, they mostly swim. Shout and applause for actions of their swimming includes spitting and splashing, jumping and diving, going deep into the water, coming back to the surface, spinning left and right, wading in between others and such other orderly actions. Though ordinarily all men including workers wear a piece of cloth during their bath yet they do take bath even without a loin cloth at times. In such behaviours, there is no place for the notion of virtue–sin. Whereas the Vedic culture not only treats such actions as *aṇācār* (evil deeds or misdeeds/bad behaviours) but also imposes its deific ideology of “pure X impure” over water. In its purview, “*āynda ariviṇar* (lit.

‘the intellectuals who explored subjects’), ‘the erudite men of wisdom’ while bathing in the pond and similar water bodies they don’t swim hastily; don’t spit in the water; don’t go down under water; don’t play; don’t bathe just up to the neck though their hairs dry without oil” (*ĀK* 14); “don’t see reflection of their own bodies” (*ĀK* 13). The people who violate these *ācārams*, in the Vedic dictum, are not men of wisdom which implicitly refers to ‘the people of lower class’/‘low castes’. As per its sanctions or injunctions, people cannot bathe as and when they desired to. But *Ācārakkōvai* insists “people, whether they wish or otherwise, must bathe before worshipping God, after evil dream, when became polluted, after vomiting, after haircut or head tonsure, before eating, after waking, after sexual intercourse, after the bodily contact with untouchables, after urinating and defecating” (*ĀK* 10). Evidently, observing all these ‘*musts*’ wholly are impractical even to an ardent adherent of orthodox Hinduism. It is really sad to observe here that the so-called ‘men of wisdom’ seemed to have no time for attending to any other work/duty except ‘bathing’ for a number of times in a day. On top of it all, the irony is that the people of Vedic Hinduism, the non-inhabitants who came all the way from some unfamiliar regions (Central Asia (Iran), Southern Russia near Caspian Sea, South-East Europe in Austria and Hungary) after 500 B.C. to Tamil country (South India), unscrupulously did castigate the aborigines (Dravidians/Tamils) of Tamil land as ‘untouchables’.

### **‘Eccils’ (Pollutions) and ‘Ācārams’ (Virtuous Acts)**

The *Ācārakkōvai* candidly expounds certain deeds of people as *eccils* (otherwise known as *tīṭṭus*, the pollutions) and *ācārams* (virtuous acts/good behaviours) and on the basis of *Dharmaśāstras*’ doctrines. It is a pity that even coming into contact physically with ‘lower class people’ is branded as one of the



*eccils* in *ĀK* (verse 10). Even lips locking, an ordinary sexual act is also bracketed under this category as an act of *eccil*, the pollution by the ethical text (*ĀK* 7). “The *eccilār*, the pure persons wouldn’t even look at *pulaiyaṇ* (untouchable due to their food culture of eating mutton, beef, fork, fish, *etc.*), moon, sun, dog, and the star falling down” (*ĀK* 6). Looking at these entities is amply *aṇācāram* (misdeeds), ‘an act of contamination’ according to the didactic work. How *pulaiyaṇ*, the man who toils hard in the land like buffaloes/bullocks and like the dogs known for their sense of gratitude came under this category of contaminated entities? We are clueless. Also we are in oblivion as to how the prevailing celestial entities *viz.* the moon, sun and the star too became the objects of contagion. Besides the afore-said *eccils*, “the *naṅgu arivār* (‘the upright savants’) don’t touch cow, *brāhmiṇ*, fire, *deva* (God/celestial body), and crown of head. Touching them is a sinful act. Definitely one must not do so” (*ĀK* 6). Hence, “*mēdaigaḷ*, ‘the genius men’ or ‘prodigies’ – after their urination, excretion, physical intercourse, and lip-locking without taking bath – don’t utter anything (probably scriptures like Vedas, *Dharmaśāstras etc.*; don’t talk/discourse/sermon/deliver (possibly like hymns, *mantras*, ethical principles, religious notions, *etc.*) and don’t sleep” (*ĀK* 8).

Similarly, there are numerous such entities/aspects put into the basket termed ‘*eccils*’. “One must not apply oil to his body without touching the water even when he is suffering from some disease. After smearing the oil, the person must not look at *pulaiyas* without sprinkling water on his body” (*ĀK* 13). “A person must not wipe the oil applied excessively to his head for smearing it on other body parts. One should not touch others’ soiled cloths; shouldn’t wear others’ slippers even to get rid of sadness or discontentment” (*ĀK* 12); “shouldn’t scratch ground; shouldn’t stay under a tree at night” (*ĀK* 13); “shouldn’t brush teeth with

twigs (mostly of banyan or neem tree) and shouldn't cut trees during full-moon day" (*ĀK* 17). Likewise, so many '*musts-not*' are packed tightly into the small but significant didactic text endorsing the Vedic dogmas. We understand that in some cases (such as not to touch others' soiled cloths, not to wear others' slippers, not to stay under a tree at night, *etc.*), of course, the notions of hygiene and concern for safety play their role pragmatically to the desired effect but in other cases (such as not to apply oil without touching water, not to look at *pulaiyas* without sprinkling the water, not to scratch ground, *etc.*) such rationality seemed to be absent. Perhaps, the learned men of Vedic literature may know the truth scripted between the lines.

### **Consumption of Food: 'Ācārams' (Virtuous Acts)**

The *Ācārakkōvai* explicitly illustrates certain deeds related to people's food culture some as righteous virtues and some other as bad ones as well. Every being consumes something or other while still in evolving period in shells or wombs. Living beings sustain their life by taking a kind of food for survival in this world. Certainly, the creatures consuming or eating some sort of food for their survival is a basic nature or core behaviour. No being can live without food. The living beings habitually take whatever food items are available in their topographical background. The food items and mannerisms of eating, needless to say, differ being to being; man to man. Evidently, every being indulges in the activity of eliminating the other one primarily for food to survive. Not all the insects, reptiles, birds, beasts, human beings are equally blessed with abundant foods. While a small section of people enjoy their life with plentiful foods and huge wealth, the major populace has been starving without anything to eat even for days together. The people of working class, perhaps all over the world, have not been privileged to eat delicious foods sitting leisurely

either on chairs or the ground. Commonly, the labourers toil hard by stuffing hurriedly some bread slices or some quantity of gruels, or some amount of food items mostly at their working environments. They don't pay much attention to the sense of hygiene while taking food. In the context of India, especially Tamil Nadu, till recently men worked in plain lands, mountains, forests, and seas and drank the water typically by gathering it with their palms folded. But according to the custom of *viṇaiyarivālar*, 'the intelligent men' who are aware of the role of *karma*, this drinking mannerism is contemptible and condemned.

"One should take food only after bath or at least after washing foot and hands but before the drying of water" (*ĀK* 19). "Thence, the person should wipe/fresh his mouth; sit on the wooden plank; sprinkle the water around the edges of the eating plate. If a person does not adhere to this custom, it is presumed that "he has not really eaten the food but only wiped his mouth; demons would take away those men's food" (*ĀK* 18). "No one should eat food in the positions – either by lying down, or by standing or by sitting on cot or in open space. No food item shall be taken excessively" (*ĀK* 23). "While eating one should sit facing the east; also without swaying and moving, not looking at anything, without talking one should take the food praying to the deity" (*ĀK* 20). Noticeably, the east direction gets importance even in people's daily routine activity as seen above. Perhaps the significance attached to the east may be due to the notion of divinity as schemed in the theology of Hinduism wherein temples and gods are respectively built and fashioned facing the east. Hence, it also rules that people should take food only after offering the same duly to God(s). In the divinity of Hinduism, the priests or *brāhmiṇs* well-versed in Vedic *śāstras* and conduct themselves earnestly as per the tenets of *Dharmaśāstras* have been highly respected next to the God(s). Perhaps recognizing them as '*periyār*' ('the noble men'), the

*Ācārakkōvai* restricts, “no one should sit alongside the ‘honourable men’ in a row in feast; shouldn’t eat before they start eating. Also no one should get up and leave from the row before these noble men finish eating” (*ĀK* 24).

Furthermore, the earliest ethical text on Hinduism prescribes also certain rules related to eating food items of different tastes. “One should start eating first the sweet (food) items and complete with bitter/astringent taste (food) items. It is only between these two categories of taste items, other flavoured food items should be taken. This is indeed the righteous *ācāram* (virtuous act)”, (*ĀK* 25), thus *Ācārakkōvai* delivers the ruling. In the case of drinking water, the rule book asserts, “one shouldn’t drink the water – by gathering it with the two palms”, (*ĀK* 28). Even “one shouldn’t wash/clean his mouth either by standing or by still walking in the water” (*ĀK* 35). That is *aṇācāram* (misdeed) in the canon book of *ĀK*. In addition to these rulings, the ethical work also dictates that “after gargling/rinsing his mouth, one should thoroughly clean the area of mouth and face thrice by uttering the appropriate *mantra*” (*ĀK* 27). Thus we notice various scheming plots in which the *mantras* also become mechanical exercise and performance of redundant.

### Urination and Excretion: ‘Ācārams’ (Virtuous Acts)

Every human being in general is more concerned with leading a hygienic life in the given environmental conditions. However, the perception of hygiene and the hygienic conduct of people do vary from time to time and from environment to environment, from person to person and from culture to culture, from creed to creed and from country to country. While European countries maintain the utmost hygienic environment in their private as well as public spheres, the Asian countries in general are unable to manage the desired clean environment due to several factors. Certainly, over

population of the Asian continent is the main culprit in this regard. Scantly caring for maintaining hygienic environment is the major factor which causes untold health hazards to Indian populace inside the country and damages severely the reputation of the country outside globally. Our jumbo size population and poor education woefully make the people spit, urinate, and excrete and what not all distressing deeds (that eventually make anyone vomit) in public domains such as schools, bus stations, railway stations, even at temples' surroundings. Besides this grim environment, a sizeable population has been in a profession of begging as a thriving means to live on the spots mentioned above. Among the locations cited above, the shrines/temples – the acclaimed core entity of Vedic theology – in a way have been functioning as the citadels of thriving professions *viz.* begging and prostitution for a long time. Nevertheless, the Vedic creed – being the religion of perpetuating the notion of purity/piety since 1500 B.C. – advises rather admonishes people where they should not indulge in a set of disgraceful activities that damage the holy atmosphere by every means. To our concern in the interest of upholding the hygienic environment, the *Ācārakkōvai* cites, “no one should spit or urinate or excrete at the entities, locations and such as grass, fertile land, cow dung, graveyard, (public) pathway, water source, shrine/temple, the spot where one's shadow reflects, cow shed, and ashes” (*ĀK* 32). It is really heartening to see such caring sense thus echoed in the text though under the notion of *ācārams* that one needs to adhered to. Yet, it has peppered a volume of irrational *ācārams* endorsed by *Dharmaśāstras* in a number of verses. “A person should not urinate or excrete during the day facing the south, at night the north” (*ĀK* 33). “If they urinate or excrete in other directions out of compulsion, then they should imagine themselves that the directions have indeed disappeared to nowhere and hence they have relieved the natural

call(s) themselves by staying at mid-air. Yet people should avoid doing so for goodness even though the post of Indra is said to be offered” (*ĀK* 34).

### **Hospitality/Entertaining Guests: ‘Ācārams’ (Virtuous Acts)**

A unique trait of human beings called ‘hospitality’ *i.e.* ‘entertaining guests’ is a core living quality found in every culture. Needless to say, every clan or ethnicity has formed its own manners, means or materials to entertain guests. This concept in Tamil is termed “*Virundu Ōmbal*”. The English term ‘guest’ and the Tamil term ‘*virundu*’ are however not closely connected to each other in terms of their etymological meanings. *Virundu* (> *Virundiṇar*), a term denoting ‘guests’ now, indeed referred to ‘novelty’/‘newness’ > ‘new faces’ *i.e.* ‘unknown people’ in the heroic age and post-Sangam period. Thus entertaining the new people/unknown people/strangers had been termed as *virundu ōmbal* in Tamil. The Tamil term *virundulvirundiṇar* is denoted as ‘*atithi*’<sup>10</sup> in Sanskrit. Entertaining *atithis* is emphasized in Vedic culture too, as ‘a must *ācāram*’ (virtuous act) that one needs to observe for heaven’s sake but not as ‘a desired human’/‘corporeal gesture’. “The righteous people don’t put a vessel (containing rice) on fire just for themselves. They don’t take food for themselves alone just to live but for the cause of serving others” (*ĀK* 39), thus endorses *ĀK*. While deliberating on the matter of visiting of guests, *Manu Dharma* states, “the *brahmin* can go as a guest to the homes of *kshatriya*, *vaishya*, and *shudra* at any time. But others are not entitled to go as guests to *brahmin*’s home” (*Manu Dharmaśāstra*, III: 110-12), And the *Dharmasūtra* of Gauthama V. 39-42 and *Manu* III. 110-12 say that “a *kṣatriya* is not really an *atithi* to a *brāhmaṇa* nor are *vaiśyas* nor *śūdras*” (Kane, 1941: 751). According to the *Manu Dharmaśāstra*, “one has to honour guests according to one’s ability, that guests are to

be preferred according to the order of *varṇas* and that among the *brāhmaṇas*, the *śrotriya* and one who has completely mastered (at least one) recension of the Veda is to be preferred” (*Ibid.*). As mentioned in the *Manu Dharmaśāstra* (III: 99 & 107), “the guest is to be shown honour by going out to meet him, by offering him water to wash his feet, by giving him a seat, by lighting a lamp before him, by giving food and lodging, by personal attendance on him, by offering him a bed and by accompanying him some distance when he departs” (*Ibid.*, p. 752). Also *Anuśāsana* 7.6 says, “the host should give his eye, mind and agreeable speech to the guest, he should personally attend on him and should accompany guest, when he (the guest) departs” (*Ibid.*, p. 753). All these virtues are just quoted verbatim in one of the verses of *Ācārakkōvai* (verse 54). Just echoing the *Varṇāśrama Dharma* ideology of upholding the hierarchal system, the *Taittirīya Saṃhita* (2.2.4) refers to the fact that, “when a guest comes, hospitality in which ghee abounds, is offered to him and it remarks that ‘one who comes in a chariot and one who comes in a cart are the two most honoured among guests’” (Kane 1941: 749). As it was strongly believed that entertaining the guests would certainly fetch all the fortunes to the present birth as well as to the future one, the *ĀK* underlines, “the people who never deviate from virtues do take food only after offering the same to guests, elders, cow, bird, and child” (*ĀK* 21). Further it adds, “the noble men don’t sit on high raised seat when the guests are eating at their home. They don’t indulge in any act that aggrieve the guests even though the formers had rendered a volume of miseries improperly” (*ĀK* 40). While insisting people to offer food on special occasions, the ethical text underscores, a person must entertain with food everyone including guests on his wedding day, on a holy day when venerating gods, on the day of *darppaṇam* (Vedic ritual in which libations of water are offered to one’s ancestors),

on the day of festivals and on the day of *yajña* (worship performed with sacrificial fire)” (*ĀK* 48); may offer something as *dān* (the act of giving alms/charity) too. It was actually believed that these all would bestow all fortunes on the person who treats people earnestly with food while entertaining them sincerely. It needs to be recalled here that offering food and place besides other facilities for all *virundiṇar* (unknown people) was rightly called ‘*virundu ōmbal*’ (entertaining guests) in the ancient Tamil culture. But in Vedic culture, *dān* should be strictly offered to people (presumably to the priests/*brāhmiṇs* who are well-versed with Vedas and *Śāstras*) only who are nobler than the donor. It amply denotes that the Vedic priests/*brāhmiṇs* alone are entitled to receive *dān* from the men of other (their lower) categories but not vice versa. This has been very clearly scribed in *ĀK* as, “if a *brāhmiṇ* offers a cow as *dān* then one should not receive it” (*ĀK* 90). Because, *brāhmiṇs*, as per *Dharmaśāstras*, the men of higher class are alone rightly qualified to receive *dān* from the men of lower categories. The latter are unqualified to receive something as *dān* from the higher ups. Entertaining guests and offering *dān*, as per the codes of Vedic *śāstras*, are essentially carried out by one vying for ‘goodness’. The men who receive such bestowals must be in the position of conferring their ‘good wishes’ or ‘blessings’ on those men in turn. So a kind of divinity is shrewdly attributed to Vedic priests/*brāhmiṇs* in the *Dharmaśāstras*. In such schemes, we notice that the hierarchal notion of the orthodox creed has been operating dynamically since ages perhaps even till date. Here the donors happened to be the men of lower categories while the receivers the men of higher categories. If there is any mess up in this regard, it is assumed that the men of both categories would be engulfed with the ‘sin’. But, this very hierarchal notion of Vedic times allegedly has taken a slight shift at present. No Vedic priest now-a-days wholeheartedly will go to a lower



class man's home for *dān* unless the donor is economically well-off and socially/politically a significant person.

### At Evenings and Nights: 'Ācārams' (Virtuous Acts)

"Dawn to Dusk", as the English idiom rightly puts it, every living being starts its life every day afresh in the morning and ends with fatigue at night. Before night fall, almost all the creatures including man return to their respective dwelling place for the required rest. Perhaps, the evening period – especially the sunset is the most pleasing interval before calling off the day. Well, for a man who toils hard throughout the day on hillock, jungle, field, and at seacoast regions under the scorching sun seldom finds proper time and place to take rest or nap during the day. When he finds a little time even at weird places like barren floor or hard earth, he would instantly lie down for a while. He wouldn't have any qualm over it. But "a traditional person, who grows with Vedas, *mantra*, and *tantra* by adhering sincerely to ritual observances, must discharge his duties of the day with determined mind like that of constructive ant, weaver bird, and crow. So that the person's *ācāram* (virtuous act) would excel by all means" (*ĀK* 96); "His present life would prosper. Hence, the person who duly respects *ācāram* shouldn't sleep in the evening time" (*ĀK* 29). Besides, "he should not take food at sunset. He should put on the light before the darkness. He shouldn't go out after dinner" (*ĀK* 29). All these are vilifications of divinity. One should always discharge his every deed with the devout feeling. "Even when going to bed a person should pray to god with folded hands. He shouldn't lie down keeping his head facing the north and angled directions" (*ĀK* 30). "He shouldn't go to bed before drying up of his wetted body" (*ĀK* 19); "He shouldn't lie down on the cot placed in front of the doors way" (*ĀK* 22). Though there are some pragmatic views on the concept of hygiene and rational aspects

dotted on the lines, yet the irrational aspects peppered more, actually make them insignificant. One can see its extension when the versifier endorses the view of Vedic perspective saying, “a person shouldn’t wade between two gods (in idols) and two *brāhmins*” (*ĀK* 31). Else, it is contempt. We could realize here that the *brāhmins* are equated with gods by placing them on the same pedestal. This can be further inferred when the text states, “when the noble/prodigious man blesses while one had sneezed, the latter should duly worship him” (*ĀK* 31). “No one should either give an object to nobles or take a thing from them by stretching single hand” (*ĀK* 28).

### **At Homes: ‘Ācārams’ (Virtuous Acts)**

All the living beings have some kind of pits/nests/caves/houses as their dwelling place or residence built on their own. Perhaps, the insects might be the pioneers in constructing their own webs/hives/nests. Of course, the humans must have followed suit and constructed huts/houses to save themselves from the life threatening natural hazards, and imminent dangers from reptiles and animals. The man who has had house on his own has been duly respected since time immemorial all over the world. The size, structural design and cleanliness of the house/building do indeed play a vital role in making people pay their due respect/veneration to the holder. Even abodes/shrines/temples or mosques or churches are worshipped with awesome reverence primarily on the basis of their appearances, although ‘the divine power’ of the god or goddess pivotally decides in making people adore the deity with utmost devotion and faith.

Certainly, man is the only being blessed with the intellect of keeping his house in order in terms of hygiene. And he has the acumen to keep the household things at appropriate places. While the house is just a residence for most of the people, it is much

more than the dwelling plot for others. Incidentally, the Vedic faith too does not treat the house as mere residence. It sincerely believes that like the shrines/temples the house too possesses the divine qualities. In the *garbhgriha* (sanctum sanctorum) of shrines, deity resides. Whereas in house/home lives the deity like *brāhmiṇ*. In the canons of Vedic creed, not everyone has right to enter the shrine/temple. Similarly, not everyone has the privilege to go into the *brāhmiṇ*'s home. The orthodox religion insists that the sanctity of home should be up kept in the manner the sanctity of shrine is taken care of. In its scheme, the *brāhmiṇ* is the lord of his *griha* (home). But the onus of up keeping the sanctity of home essentially lies with the wife of *brāhmiṇ*. "She should wake up from the bed in the early morning; clean the house by sweeping out the dust, trashes, and garbage; wipe the floor clean by the cow dung liquid-paste; then she should wash the blackened dirty utensils; fill the containers/tubs/drums and a cruet-like vessels with adequate water. Following it, then the *brāhmiṇ* woman should bathe and wear flowers before start cooking by lighting fire in the stove" (*ĀK* 46). She should discharge all these obligations with utmost dedication. She should protect the kitchen from any sort of *eccil* (pollution) with the sense of cleanliness. Then she should offer the food cooked to deity and take the same later" (*ĀK* 39). When she is working in the kitchen, "she should not put out the oil lamps by blowing air from her mouth; should not put out the oven while the food is still cooking; should not warm her body from the fire of oven" (*ĀK* 59). These all are *añācārams* as stated as stated by the *Ācārakkōvai*.

In the similar fashion of treating the *atishūdras* – the largest populace of the country – as 'pollutants'/'untouchables', the traditional Vedic Hinduism considers its own women people too as polluters during the days of their monthly cycle. The *Dharmaśāstras* forbid the *brāhmiṇ* women for three days to stay at their

homes when suffering from menses. They had been given cow sheds to stay during that period till recently. This is what the orthodox religion offered to the women folk who toil sincerely from dawn to dusk and gift progenies to the family to which they belong. Apparently, the space of women and their movement were confined largely with *pūja*, kitchen and bed rooms alone. This was their actual 'inner sphere' sanctioned by the traditional religion. Otherwise, they were denied access to hall even when deliberations on family matters take place. "Keeping away broom, dust and trashes, petals of flowers, old earthen pots, and torn cot from the wedding halls are also insisted as the other duties of traditional *brāhmiṇ* women" (*ĀK* 45).

"The *brāhmiṇ* women observing the virtuous deeds determinedly never look at the handsome body of other men except that of her husband" (*ĀK* 77), thus their chastity desired by Brāhminism is eulogized. Since these women happened to be the virtuous wives of well-learned, "they don't even look at their own beautiful bodies. They don't comb their hair in front of others; not even they snap their fingers" (*Ibid.*). Thus a volume of duties and taboos largely meant for women have been inscribed in the ancient ethical text. Though keeping the sanctity of home is onus more on the part of women, yet, the lord of home also has something to contribute to it. "An erudite *brāhmiṇ*, if really wishes fortune to befall his home, then don't go to his home taking *cīriyar* (lit. 'the mean minded people', presumably 'the people of lower class') along with him" (*ĀK* 68). Other than this, nothing is insisted for a *brāhmiṇ* to take care of the sanctity of his home.

Contrary to this, there are a quite number of activities that virtuous men do discharge in public sphere. Of such activities, learning, chanting/reciting, and making others chant Vedas, besides conducting *yajña* are very important acts. As maintained by Brāhmanism, since the Vedas are sacred scriptures, they

shouldn't be chanted on all the days and at any time. "They should be recited/chanted only on those days of *ashtami* (the eighth day of waxing or waning moon), *amāvāsai* (New moon day), *paurṇami* (Full moon day), and *chaturdasi* (the fourteenth day of a month). But they shouldn't be chanted or recited on those days – when the kings was in suffering/distress, when earth quack occurs, when lightning strikes, and when some sort of pollution takes place" (*ĀK* 47). "No traditional man put off *yajña* fire by pouring water into it when the sacrificial fire was conducted in daytimes" (*ĀK* 33).

"Leading the domestic life rightly bears the true virtue's name" (*TKL* 49), thus emphasizes Tiruvalluvar in his maxims. The men and women who join hands for the sake of family life are like the axle or pins of the cart. Their role is very pivotal and crucial for the world's existence and endurance. The male and female sexes need to have physical relationship for their offspring. The sexual intercourse of man and woman is termed as '*maithun*' or '*sambhog*' in Sanskrit/Hindi; '*uḍaluvavu*' in Tamil. When humans were in his early days of evolution, their 'sexual activity' must have taken place anywhere, any time at their will. When they became civilized every society charted its some codes and practices of morality. Jainism hails the renunciation more than the household life. But the Vedic religion gives prominence to family life than the abandonment of life. In its theology, man has to pass through four *āshramas* (stages) in his life. They are: *brahmacharya* (Celibacy, Student stage), > *grihastha* (Householder stage), > *vānaprastha* (Retired, Hermit stage) > *sannyāsa* (Renunciation, Wandering Ascetic stage). Under the *āshramas* scheme<sup>11</sup>, human life was thus divided into four phases. The goal of each period was the fulfillment and development of the individual. A man has to begin his career as a student focusing on education and observing the practice of celibacy. He has to stay in

the *gurukul* (residence school) where the *guru* lives. After completing the formal education and acquiring adequate knowledge of scriptures, philosophy, science, *etc.* he may move to the next stage *i.e.* ‘the householder life’. By marrying a woman in this stage the man has to take care of his household responsibilities, raise family, educate his children and deliver virtuous social life. The *grihastha* was considered as the most important of all stages in sociological context. Then slowly he has to withdraw from the interest and responsibilities of leading the family life. Finally he has ‘to renounce all desires’ and move away from his house and wander as an ascetic. Like Jainism the renunciation is emphasized in Vedic religion too but with a little difference. ‘Renunciation’ is the goal of human life in both religions. The ‘Ultimate Realization’ is termed as ‘*nirvāṇ*’ or ‘*kevalyajñān*’ in the Jainism whereas it is ‘*mukti*’ or ‘*moksha*’ in Vedic faith.

As per the injunctions of Vedic philosophy, a man cannot have sexual intercourse with his wife as and when and wherever he desires to have so. In this very private business of man too, the Vedic Hinduism gives its rulings. It points out several factors such as deity, day, star, sanctity *etc.* to be taken care of when someone wishes to have physical contact with woman. “The man who up keeps *ācāram* (virtuous act) shouldn’t have sex with his wife at midday, midnight, evening, morning, and also on the days of *tiruvātirai* (auspicious day in regard to Śiva), *tiruvōṇam* (auspicious day in regard to Viṣṇu), *paurṇami* (Full moon day), *aṣṭami* (the eighth day of waxing or waning moon), and birth day (of himself)”, (*ĀK* 43), thus *Ācārakkōvai* very clearly endorses of canons of Vedic Hinduism and candidly restricts the man. If anyone violates this norm then he will not have any development in his life. It is very strange to note that the ancient Tamil *akam* (love) convention specifically had mentioned the *naḷyāmam* (midnight *i.e.* from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.) is the most

appropriate time slot for human beings to have the blissful sexual intercourse. Nevertheless, the same is grouped under the inauspicious time schedule in which one should not indulge in sexual intercourse. Other than this time slot, the other auspicious days and odd timings perhaps may have validity or rationality that one can consider. Further, the *ĀK* strongly forbids in this regard by saying, “the *pērarivāḷar* (lit. ‘the highly knowledgeable men’), ‘the great learned men’ not only avoid having sex with their wives during their three days menstruation period but also would avoid looking at their face” (*ĀK* 42). It is quite understandable from the hygiene point of view put forward by the medical world. However, it is very pathetic that restricting the man not to see even the face of their wives during those three days. Though it sounds ridiculous, there may be a point in between the lines. If a man is more active by his ID (Impulses and Desire) then his passionate looking at wife possibly will lead him to have sex with his wife at times, which would cause some health hazard. After all these restrictions the Vedic ethical text endorses, “a man after this three days of restricted period, can have the sexual pleasure continually for twelve days without leaving his wife for a while even” (*Ibid.*). This is really heartening that one can welcome the sanction without any fuss. It indeed sounds like a perfect prescription/good advice from an expert gynaecologist to a woman whose aim is not to conceive but to have the blissful sexual pleasure.

### **‘Ācārams’ (Virtuous Acts) of ‘Cāṇrōr’ (Noble Men)**

The world indeed comprises countless beings beyond our imagination. In every being, good and bad elements do co-exist from the evolution. In human kind, there exist simultaneously different categories – such as kings, justices, nobles, teachers, learned, farmers, traders, warriors, wrestlers, musicians, singers, dancers, illiterates, pimps, prostitutes, thieves, thugs, beggars, and what

not – evolved on the basis of environment, education, knowledge, profession, character, and so on. The human beings, in a sense, are really fortunate. When non-human beings allegedly can't learn good or bad attributes in systematic manners from their fellow beings, human beings can have knowledge/wisdom and guidance on every matter from their elders. Out of the experience-cum-knowledge or wisdom, the erudite men talked about and chalked out certain rules and regulations, conventions and values and so on for leading life in a way beneficial to him and society. It is because of the intelligence, prudence and exemplary characteristics of prevailing nobles/wise men the world till date exists – though had seen and has been seeing numerous downfalls. The characteristics attributed to noble men do naturally vary from time to time, from culture to culture and from creed to creed. The men who led the life strictly as per the injunctions of Vedic *śāstras* are hailed as noble men/wise men/great men or prodigious men. “*Tirappaṭṭār* (the men of wisdom) do feel the pain of fellow men as their own. When fellow humans live cheerful, these people would indulge in such activities to make them further merry” (*ĀK* 79). “Even when they become annoyed, these great men – don't call names of their elders including their parents; don't rebuke them improperly; don't abuse even *pulaiyar* (untouchables) by derogatory terms; don't stay at a place when they become angry with their wives” (*ĀK* 80). These well-mannered men would be very conscious enough where and how they should behave with other people. These people would never do anything that brings bad reputation to their family/clan. So “the *tirappaṭṭār* (‘the men of wisdom’) don't enter the homes of loveless people” (*ĀK* 79). Further, “these *cevvīyār* (‘the noble men’) don't enter anybody's home through backyard; don't visit the king – when the monarch was in his private chamber or bedroom with his queen” (*ĀK* 81). The well-cultured people don't tom-tom their



self-pride. This is one of their fine attributes. So, “they don’t talk about the favours that they rendered to others. They don’t talk praising their charity extended to people and they don’t glorify their *nōṇbu* (the ritualistic observance or fasting) observed by them. These men of gratitude don’t complain about the food that was offered to them by others” (*ĀK* 88). These *meyyāya kātciyavar* (lit. ‘the true visionaries’), the men of wisdom don’t desire for the improbable things; don’t worry for the loss of wealth; don’t lose their heart even when miseries ceaselessly engulf them” (*ĀK* 89). They strongly believe that everything happens by at the will of fate. So, they tend to take everything in good spirit. Subsequently, they justly believe that if they worship their deity with utmost devotion, and perform sincerely certain atonements then everything would be alright. So they used to carry out certain rituals in this regard for welfare and benefits. These wise men “*don’t live* near the brothel houses of prostitutes” (*ĀK* 82). “The men who earnestly care for their reputation – *don’t look* at the burning light of thunderbolt and the down falling star; also they *don’t look* at the beautiful decoration of whores. And they *don’t look* at even the beaming rays of the sun in the morning and self-effacing light of the same in the evening” (*ĀK* 51). As per the etymological meaning of the Tamil term *nōkkār* (lit. ‘the people who don’t look at something or somebody’) employed in the verse, we can comprehend that *seeing* just casually the anything is *not unethical*. Whereas *looking at* them is *immoral*. Whether the men physically become corrupt or not but mentally or spiritually he can become polluted. When one’s body gets polluted, it can be cleaned in a short time. When mind gets infected, it will be next to impossible to get back the name lost out of infested action. So, “these *naḍukkarra kātciyar* (lit. ‘the visionaries of unwavering mind’), ‘the resolute men of wisdom’ don’t *look at* women when they pound or husk something put into *ulakkai* (the long and

heavy wooden pestle used traditionally in villages for pounding or husking paddy, ragi, *etc.*), and also they don't go to the home where a woman lives alone" (*ĀK* 99). "Besides, these men don't look at kitchen room either" (*Ibid.*). As these resolute men are very shrewd too, "they don't go to the melancholy places like gambling spot, and locations where *hulla gulla* is in roaring gear. If they go, then sure they will get a volume of miseries" (*ĀK* 98). Thus *Ācārakkōvai* unveils a number of ethical as well as unethical deeds that men need to adhere to for the sake of honorable life.

### **‘Aṇācārams’ (Non-Virtuous Acts)**

Besides endorsing almost a whole lot of *dharma*s inscribed in *Dharmaśāstras*, the ethical treatise *Ācārakkōvai* also ratifies some sacrilegious *adharmas* or *aṇācārams* that one should be aware of and stay away from those unethical activities. The thesis of the ethical discourse is that if a person desires to have a fortunate life, he should tread the path of nobles. He should adore them on a par with the god wherever he sees them. "When a man wishes to convey something to great men/elders, first he should pay his respect to them. Then keeping his mouth covered by palm he should express obediently in low voice whatever he wishes to" (*ĀK* 97). The man should avoid yelling at people whosoever it may be – from great men/elders to mean minded/younger people – when they already had passed ahead of them. And the person should also elude himself from sneezing, enquiring about the people's endpoint of their journey. Further, he should avoid interrupting and expressing something to them in the middle of the way" (*ĀK* 58). If the person disobeys, then all these become *aṇācārams* (non-virtuous acts or bad behaviours) as per the view of *ĀK*. Cultured people do evade themselves from showing undue interest in several things. "They don't ask anyone – be he/she the priest, *guru*, mother, father, elder brother, nobles or *pulaiyas* even

– about the food items that they have taken” (*ĀK* 86). This is uncultured act, according the ethical text. The text while ratifying the Vedic ethics’ primary notion of “purity X impurity” observes, “no one should wash the feet of a person, should not garland him/her and more notably they should not at any cost smear sandal paste. And they should not stand near them” (*ĀK* 87). We could perceive here the analogy employed denoting suggestively the decorations usually done to the dead bodies. Customarily, when someone is no more, people used to assemble at the place of deceased person, wash his/her feet, put sandal *tilak* on his/her forehead and decorate him/her with garlands. These things become taboo for the living person when lying down on the cot. “A well-cultured person (perhaps more specifically, a dignified woman) ought to avoid wearing the flowers worn and smelt by others” (*ĀK* 90). Noticeably, the versifier Kayattūr Peruvāyiṇ Muḷliyār validates the sanctity whatsoever assigned to flowers by the orthodox Vedic Hinduism in culture sphere.

### ‘Svarg’ (Heaven) – ‘Narak’ (Hell): ‘Ācārams’ (Virtuous Acts)

Every creed immensely believes that somewhere above the sky exists ‘the Abode of Gods’ or ‘the World of Celestials housing the ‘*svarg*’ (heaven) – ‘*narak*’ (hell) halls within. All the religions systematically elucidate about these halls, of course, in different terms. In the context of India, the Vedic religion puts forward the thesis that there exists ‘the Primordial Deity’ or ‘the Absolute Power’ from which all the ‘Creatures’ or ‘Beings’ have materialized. Thus the Creatures or Beings are, in fact, considered as the manifestations of that ‘Supreme Power’. These ‘Entities of Created’ have to return to ‘the Abode of the Creator’ ultimately after experiencing the provisional life on the earth for some period. The Vedic faith further reiterates that the heaven or hell is

actually accorded to *jīvas* ('the souls' *i.e.* 'all beings') on the basis of their *nalvīṇaigaḷ* (good deeds) and *tīvīṇaigaḷ* (bad deeds) carried out during the interim existence on earth. If human beings discharge upright deeds, certainly they could accomplish the *muktilmoksha* or *svarg*. Though Jainism also endorses this very notion of achieving *svarg* by one's righteous actions but discards the conception of God as it firmly hails the concept of perfect souls' existence on higher plane. Contrary to these faiths Buddhism out rightly rejects whatsoever the views on Godhead and Perfect Souls. It is the *sangha* (Assembly or Community) of Atheism juxtaposed to the Vedic religion on every matter, whereas more close to Jainism on emphasizing the righteous conduct for human beings.

According to Vedic and Jaina philosophies, stealing and enjoying others' belongings/properties are colossal wicked acts. It is unfortunate that in these two religions, women – the living human beings – were also grouped under the category of one's properties. "Adultery (covertly enjoying other man's wife), drinking toddy/liquor, stealing, gambling and killing are *pañca māpāthakas* (the five gravest sins), thus *ĀK* (verse 37) approves the views of *Dharmaśāstras* in toto. It is a firm conviction of Vedic faith that these gravest sins are being executed only by lower class people. *Ācārakkōvai*, the ethical text echoing openly the belief of the orthodox religion affirms that "the *aṇaṇarindār* (lit. 'the men mindful of *dharma*s'), the virtuous men would never think of committing such sinful acts. If they think so, they would be derided as the men lacking noble ethos. Besides the wicked people would ultimately end up reaching the *nirayam* (hell)", (*Ibid.*). The orthodox ethical treatise similarly further asserts that "the *aiyamīr kātciyar* (lit. 'the visionaries of doubts be cleared'), the resolute men of wisdom wouldn't think of uttering lie and indulge in backbiting, wouldn't steal and become envy. If they

think so, doubts over their piety will enter into the minds of people, and they will certainly reach hell. Alas! Even God will become angry and forsake them!” (*ĀK* 38). Thus, the text just endorses the codes of the Brāhmanism fully in letter and spirit. In doing so, although good for higher ethical life but it frightens the mankind by saying that they would reach hell even for their usual attributes such as lying and backbiting. If we weigh the validity of the aforesaid factors pragmatically with the reality of the world that existed then and existing now, we could imagine the grim situation wherein most people must be tossed out and aggrieved in hell than living in the earth. It may be stated here that **the halls of ‘heaven’ and ‘hell’ do not really exist anywhere beyond our purview. The two-fold mansions are indeed present within us – in our feelings and conduct of our daily life.** Evidently, heaven or hell indeed is not a place but a state of feeling or consciousness that humans only can accomplish by adhering sincerely to certain basic ethical codes and practices endorsed by their nobles. So, it is up to each individual to make or break heaven or hell. Essentially, everyone should adhere genuinely to the core etiquette and ethos of their society wherein they live for his/her happiness and that of fellow beings. Perhaps, in the quest for shepherding humans in the righteous path, the *Dharmaśāstras* and *Ācārakkōvai* reiterated the aforesaid abstract forts viz. ‘heaven’ and ‘hell’ by employing the typical strategy of ‘reward’ or ‘punishment’ to people’s virtuous conducts and evil deeds respectively.

To sum up, the *ācārams* and *aṇācārams* – to be firmly adhered to by every traditional man from sleeping to salvation – are basically ritualistic but not very realistic by nature. Whatsoever observed ceremonially could not be said comprising the actual spirit or zeal/liveliness. Can the spiritless observances be called as *ācārams*? Waking from bed, taking bath, dressing, eating, sleep-

ing, and indulging in sex – Do all these actions need to be discharged ritualistically or realistically? Does such mechanical acting accomplish the *moksha*? No! Not at all! For that matter, no act should ever be discharged ceremoniously – be it eating or excreting, sleeping or waking up, working or worshipping. When the scriptures of bygone era insist man to observe certain traditional codes and practices, possibly there may be rationality or logic or scientific reasons behind their pronouncements. But what is important above everything is that their applicability and adaptability. Expecting everyone – including the underprivileged who struggle hard daily from hand to mouth with very little sources – to observe all orthodox codes and practices in the name of religious custom is next to impractical and irrational. However, one should not excuse himself/herself but should observe and upheld certain very basic ethics or fundamental virtuous codes resolutely to the possible extent for the benefit of individual and for the welfare of society.

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## Notes

- \* This essay is the English version of my paper entitled ‘**Uṛakkam Mudal Tuṛakkam Varai: Ācāra-Aṇācārangaḷ**’ (in Tamil) presented in the National Seminar “**Paḍiṇeḷ Kīlkkāṇakku Nūlgaḷil Kaḍamaigaḷum Urimaigaḷum**” (Duties and Rights Stated in Eighteen Didactic Works) sponsored by Central Institute of Classical Tamil, Chennai held at P.S.G. Krishnammal Women’s College, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu during 11–13, February 2010.

1. *Paḍiṇeṇ Kīlkkāṇakku Nūlgaḷ* (Eighteen Didactic Works):  
*Tirukkuraḷ, Nālaḍiyār, Paḷamoḷi Nāṇūru, Nāṇmaṇikkaḍigai, Iniyavai Nārpadu, Inṇā Nārpadu, Kār Nārpadu, Kaḷavaḷi Nārpadu, Tirikaḍugam, Ācārakkōvai, Cīrupaṇcamūlam, Mudumolikkāñci, Ēlādi, Tiṇaimoḷi Aimbadu, Aintiṇai Aimbadu, Aintiṇai Eḷubadu, Tiṇaimālai Nūrraimbadu, Kainnilai.*
2. *Ācārakkōvai* is an ethical work included in the compilation of the Eighteen Didactic Tamil Works called *Paḍiṇeṇ Kīlkkāṇakku Nūlgaḷ*. The title literally means “the garland of moral codes”. Its author Kayattūr Peruvāyiṇ Muḷḷiyār of Śaiva faith seems to be highly influenced by Vedic *Śāstras* and tenets of Hinduism. There is heavy dosage of Brahminical influence in a number of verses. Hence, it is considered to be the ethical work composed in the later period of post-Sangam Age *i.e.* A.D. 800. The ethical work has 100 poems in *Veṇpā* meter and is a collection of moral exhortations, ritual observances and customs that are considered so proper and correct for everyone. The injunctions endorsed in the stanzas of *Ācārakkōvai* are concerned with personal rituals, morals, etiquettes, taboos and the proper methods to follow in day today life.
3. Please see the reference cited in the foot no. 4, chapter I.
4. *Akam* (pronounced *aham*) means ‘inner’ or ‘interior’ emotions (mostly of women) such as sexual union, sulking, separation, waiting with patience, and waiting with anxiety. It also refers to ‘heart’ and ‘household’ in Tamil diction. *Akam* poems are love poems.
5. *Puṛam* means ‘outer’ or ‘exterior’ actions (largely of men) such as dignity, valour, munificence, mourning, and so on. *Puṛam* poems are all other kinds of poems, usually about war, values, community; it is the “public” poetry of the ancient Tamils, celebrating the ferocity and glory of kings, lamenting the death of heroes, poems on wars and tragic events are *puṛam* poems.
6. *Varṇa*, a Sanskrit term literally means “colour”. It is derived from the root ‘*vrnoti*’ meaning ‘to cover’ or ‘to envelop’. The word finds its first mention in the *Rig Veda* where it stands for ‘outer appearance and colour’ besides the figurative “race, colour, kind, sort, character, quality”. As detailed in *Manusmṛiti* (Laws of Manu), (200 B.C.–A.D. 200), the earliest metrical work of the *Dharma-*

*śāstras*, The *Varṇa* system as laid down in the religious texts right from the *Rig Veda* to the *Manusmṛiti* was based on four hierarchically arranged *Varṇas* viz. *Brāhmiṇs*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Shūdras* with the *Avarṇas* (Untouchables) placed at the bottom of hierarchy.

Source: <http://www.ijelr.in/2.1.15/237-239%20RICHA%20SHARMA.pdf>

Accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2016.

As per the citations of *Manusmṛiti*, people of the four *Varṇas* are believed to have born to the Brahman, the Almighty from His mouth, arms, thighs, and feet respectively. See the *Slokas* of *Manusmṛiti* given below:

“But for the sake of the prosperity of the worlds he caused the *Brahmana*, the *Kshatriya*, the *Vaisya*, and the *Sudra* to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his thighs, and his feet” (*Manu Smṛiti* 1.31)

“But in order to protect this universe He, the most resplendent one, assigned separate (duties and) occupations to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs, and feet” (*Manu Smṛiti* 1.87).

Source: <https://www.quora.com/Vedic-Hinduism-Why-did-Manu-Smṛiti-created-four-varna-system-and-looks-Shudras-so-low-Why-didnt-the-ancient-scholars-oppose-it>

Accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2016.

7. Source: [https://ta.wikipedia.org/wiki/கொன்றை\\_வேந்தன்](https://ta.wikipedia.org/wiki/கொன்றை_வேந்தன்)  
Accessed on 01<sup>st</sup> Sep. 2016
8. *Gurukula* (Sanskrit: *Gurukul*) is a type of residential school in India with pupils (*shishya*) living near the *guru*, often in the same house. Before British rule, they served as South Asia’s primary educational institution. The *guru-shishya* tradition (*parampara*) is a hallowed one in Hinduism and appears in other religious groups in India, such as Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. The word *gurukula* is a contraction of the Sanskrit *guru* (teacher or master) and *kula* (extended family).

In a *gurukula*, *shishya* live together as equals, irrespective of their social standing, learn from the *guru* and help the *guru* in his day-to-day life, including the carrying out of mundane chores such as



washing clothes, cooking, etc. Typically, a *guru* does not receive any fees from the *shishya* studying with him. At the end of his studies, a *shishya* offers the *guru dakshina* before leaving the *gurukula* or *ashram*. The *gurudakshina* is a traditional gesture of acknowledgment, respect and thanks to the *guru*, which may be monetary, but may also be a special task the teacher wants the student to accomplish. While living in a *gurukula* the students had to be away from home and family completely. The *guru* did not take any fees and so they had to serve the *guru*.

*Gurukula* have existed since the Vedic age. *Upanishads* mention many *gurukula*, including that of *guru* Drona at Gurugram, Yajnavalkya, Varuni. Bhṛigu Valli, the famous discourse on Brahman, is mentioned to have taken place in *Guru Varuni's gurukula*. Vedic school of thought prescribes an initiation (*Upanayana*, a compulsory *Sanskara* or activity for a Hindu living) to all individuals before the age of 8 or latest by 12. From initiation until the age of 25 all individuals are prescribed to be students and to remain unmarried.

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gurukula>

Accessed on 22.08.2016

9. Enlightenment refers to the "full comprehension of a situation". ... It translates several Buddhist terms and concepts, most notably *Bodhi*, *Kensho* and *Satori*. Related terms from Asian religions are *Moksha* (liberation) in Hinduism, *Kevala Jnana* in Jainism, and *Ushṭa* in Zoroastrianism.

In Christianity, the word "enlightenment" is rarely used, except to refer to the Age of Enlightenment and its influence on Christianity. Roughly equivalent terms in Christianity may be illumination, kenosis, metanoia, revelation, salvation and conversion.

The English term "enlightenment" has commonly been used to translate several Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese and Japanese terms and concepts, especially *bodhi*, *prajna*, *kensho*, *satori* and *Buddhahood*.

*Bodhi* is a *Theravada* term. It literally means "awakening" and "understanding". Someone who is awakened has gained insight into the workings of the mind which keeps us imprisoned in cra-

ving, suffering and rebirth, and has also gained insight into the way that leads to nirvana, the liberation of oneself from this imprisonment.

*Prajna* is a *Mahayana* term. It refers to insight into our true nature, which according to *Madhyamaka* is empty of a personal essence in the stream of experience. But it also refers to the *Tathāgata-garbha* or Buddha-nature, the essential basic-consciousness beyond the stream of experience.

In Indian religions *moksha* (*mokṣa*; liberation) or *mukti* (release – both from the root *muc* "to let loose, let go") is the final extrication of the soul or consciousness (*purusha*) from *samsara* and the bringing to an end of all the suffering involved in being subject to the cycle of repeated death and rebirth (reincarnation).

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enlightenment\\_\(spiritual\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enlightenment_(spiritual))

Accessed on 24<sup>th</sup> Aug. 2016

10. *Atithi*: “The word ‘*atithi*’ is from the root ‘*at*’ to go and also from ‘*tithi*’ (day) and ‘*a*’ meaning ‘comes’ (from ‘*ī*’ with ‘*abhi*’). [...] Manu and others say that for a whole *tithi* (i.e. day) and ‘an *atithi*’ is a *brāhmaṇa* who stays for one night only as a guest” (Kane 1941: 751). *Dharmasutra* of Gauthama V. 36, Manu III. 102-103 and *Yajñavalkyasmṛti* I. 107 state that he is called an *atithi* who belonging to a different village and intending to stay one night only arrives in the evening, that one who has already been invited for dinner is not an *atithi* properly so called, that a person who belongs to the same village or who is a friend or fellow-student is not an *atithi*” (Kane, *Ibid.*).

Cf.: Pandurang Vaman Kane. 1941. *History of Dharmasastra*. Vol. II, Part II. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute. pp. 149-152.

11. Under the Ashram system, the human life was divided into four periods. The goal of each period was the fulfillment and development of the individual. While some Indian texts present these as sequential stages of human life and recommend age when one enters each stage, many texts state that the *Āshramas* as four alternative ways of life and options available, but not as sequential stage that any individual must follow, nor do they place any age limits.

### The *Āshrama* System

Ashram or stage	Age (years)	Description	Rituals of transition
<i>Brahmacharya</i> (Student life)	Till 24 years	<i>Brahmacharya</i> represented the bachelor student stage of life. This stage focused on education and included the practice of celibacy. The student went to a <i>Gurukul</i> (house of the <i>Guru</i> ) and typically would live with a <i>Guru</i> (teacher), acquiring knowledge of science, philosophy, scriptures and logic, practicing self-discipline, working to earn <i>dakshina</i> to be paid for the <i>guru</i> , learning to live a life of Dharma (righteousness, morals, duties).	<i>Upanayana</i> at entry. <i>Samavartana</i> at exit.
<i>Grihastha</i> (House holder life)	From 24 to 48 years	This stage referred to the individual's married life, with the duties of maintaining a household, raising a family, educating one's children, and leading a family-centred and a dharmic social life. <i>Grihastha</i> stage was considered as the most important of all stages in sociological context, as human beings in this stage not only pursued a virtuous life, they produced food and wealth that sustained people in other stages of life, as well as the offspring that continued mankind. The stage also represented one where the most intense physical, sexual, emotional, occupational, social and material attachments exist in a human being's life.	Hindu Wedding at entry.

<i>Vana-prastha</i> (Retired life)	From 48 to 72 years	The retirement stage, where a person handed over household responsibilities to the next generation, took an advisory role, and gradually withdrew from the world. <i>Vānaprastha</i> stage was a transition phase from a householder's life with its greater emphasis on <i>Artha</i> and <i>Kāma</i> (wealth, security, pleasure and sexual pursuits) to one with greater emphasis on <i>Moksha</i> (spiritual liberation).	
<i>Sannyasa</i> (Renounced life)	From 72 onwards (or any-time)	The stage was marked by renunciation of material desires and prejudices, represented by a state of disinterest and detachment from material life, generally without any meaningful property or home (Ascetic), and focused on <i>Moksha</i> , peace and simple spiritual life. Anyone could enter this stage after completing the <i>Brahmacharya</i> stage of life.	

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashrama\\_\(stage\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashrama_(stage))

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## Index

### A

Absolute Being, 113.

*Ācārakkōvai*, 15, 93-99, 102,  
105-07, 110, 115, 117-20,  
122, 126, 129, 133, 135-  
36, 138.

*ācāram(s)*, 113, 136.

*āchārya(s)*, 88, 108.

*adharm*, 72.

*adharma*, 133.

*adhikāram*, 4, 5, 8.

*adṛṣṭ*, 72.

*aiyamil kāṭciyavar*, 101.

*akam*, 1, 3, 40, 89, 129, 138;  
~ poems, 2, 39, 42, 49,  
90, 138; ~ tradition, 37.

*Akanāṇūru*, 40, 47, 74.

alcohol, 16.

Almighty, 96, 108, 139.

*Ālvārs*, 24.

*amāvāsai*, 128.

*aṇācār*, 114.

*aṇācāram(s)*, 116, 119, 126,  
133, 136.

*aṇācāras*, 112.

*aṇbaḷ/aṇbi*, 43.

*aṇban*, 39, 42.

*aṇbu*, 39, 42, 73.

ancient society, 91.

Andhra Pradesh, 90.

*aṇiccam*, 60.

*anīti*, 71.

*āṇmai*, 95.

*Aṇṇai*, 106.

anthill, 105.

*Anuśāsana*, 122.

*anyāy*, 71.

*aṇam*, 4, 5, 95.

*aṇaṇarindār*, 135.

*aṇaṇ valiyuṇṇuttal*, 5.

*arasaṇ*, 95.

*Aṇattuppāl*, 11.

*arccaṇai*, 71.

*Arihant*, 113.

*aṇiṇaṇ*, 26.

*arivai*, 54.

army, 27, 28, 36.

arrack, 103.

*aruṇkēḷiyavar*, 101.

Aryan, 71, 78.

*asaīyāda uḷḷattavar*, 102.

ascetic(s), 6, 7.

Asian, 119; ~ countries, 119;  
~ continent, 119; ~ reli-  
gions, 140.

*āshrama*, 95.

*ashṭami*, 128-29.

*atishūdras*, 112, 126.

*atithi*, 121.  
*ātma*, 72.  
 Austria, 115.  
 Avvaiyār, 106.  
*āynda arivinar*, 108, 114.

## B

bad, 92.  
 banana trees, 41.  
 battlefield(s), 28, 29, 103.  
 battles, 27.  
 bee, 43, 44.  
 begging, 9, 10, 33, 120.  
 Bhagavad Gita, 2.  
*bhāgya*, 72.  
*bhakta*, 97.  
*bhakti*, 100; ~ Movement,  
 24, 26.  
 Bharati, 3.  
*bhūtas*, 104.  
 Bible, 2.  
 bitterness, 92.  
 black, 92.  
 blacksmith, 27, 28.  
 blasphemy, 97.  
 body language, 98.  
 boozing, 25.  
 Brahma, 73.  
*brahmacharya*, 128.  
*brāhmaṇa(s)*, 121-22.  
 Brāhmaṇism, 88, 94, 127,  
 136.  
*brāhmin(s)*, 51, 91, 94, 98-  
 101, 103, 105, 108, 114,  
 116, 118, 123, 125-27.  
 British, 57, 61, 70, 71, 78;  
 ~ colony, 62; ~ culture, 58.

Buddha, 112.  
 Buddhism, 6, 25, 88, 91, 93,  
 111, 113, 139.  
 Buddhahood, 113.  
 bull, 27.

## C

*cālpu*, 29.  
*cālbukkunaṅgaḷ*, 26.  
*cāṇṇāṇmai*, 26.  
*cāṇṇavar*, 26.  
*cāṇṇōṇ*, 25-32.  
*cāṇṇōr*, 23, 26, 29, 30, 32,  
 33, 77.  
*cāral nāḍaṇ*, 40.  
*ceṅkōṇmai*, 10.  
*Cēra*, 3, 89.  
*cevvīyār*, 108, 131.  
*ceyynnaṇṇi aridal*, 69.  
*Ceyyūḷiyal*, 52.  
 chariot, 52-54.  
 charioteer, 53.  
*chaturdasi*, 128.  
 chastity, 7-9, 12, 57, 127.  
 chieftains, 2.  
 Christian, 8; ~ era, 8.  
 Christianity, 3.  
*cigai nīkkukādaṇi viḷā*, 51.  
*Cilappatikāram*, 24.  
*cindiyal veṇṇpā*, 17.  
*Cīr(s)*, 4.  
*ciṇṇiyar*, 127.  
*Cīrupaṇcamūlam*, 14.  
 civilization, 24, 61, 62, 89,  
 99, 107, 111.  
 clan culture, 94.  
 clandestine love, 63.

clean, 94, 119, 126; ~ environment, 119.  
 codes and conduct, 25.  
 Cōla, 3, 89, 90; ~ king, 2, 20, 55.  
*Colladigāram*, 52.  
*condam*, 57.  
*condakkārargaḷ*, 57.  
 conjugal bliss, 3.  
 cows, 100, 105.  
 Creator, 9, 90, 111, 134.  
 cultural mobility, 24, 51, 77.  
 culture, 24, 26, 33, 42, 52, 57, 58, 61, 62, 70, 77, 89, 90, 94, 99, 105, 107, 111, 114, 116-17, 119, 121, 131, 134.  
*curram*, 57, 58.  
*currattiṇar*, 57.

## D

*dān*, 123-24.  
*darppaṇam*, 122.  
*darittiram*, 104  
 day-tryst, 52.  
 decrees, 92.  
 deities, 90, 112.  
 deserts, 94.  
*deva*, 116.  
*deyvam*, 58, 106.  
*dharm*, 72.  
*Dharma(s)*, 5, 32, 95, 110, 112, 133; ~ *śāstra(s)*, 88, 110, 115-16, 118, 120-23, 126, 136, 138; *sutra*, 121, 141.  
 dictums, 100.

didactic composition, 14, 94.  
 didactic literature, 1, 3, 8, 16, 18.  
 didactic text, 117.  
 didactic treatise, 25.  
 didactic work(s), 4, 11, 13, 16, 87, 88, 98, 101, 106, 111, 116.  
 diktats, 91.  
*dīpāvali*, 51.  
 dog, 13.  
 drunkards, 103.  
*dur*, 72.  
*duradṛṣṭ*, 72.  
*durātma*, 72.  
*durbhāgya*, 72.  
*durnārram*, 77.

## E

*eccil(s)*, 115-16.  
*eccilār*, 116.  
 education, 12, 32, 67, 68, 70, 94, 95, 97, 99, 103, 108, 109, 120, 128-29, 131.  
 egg-shell, 48.  
 Eighteen Minor Works, 3.  
*Ēlādi*, 14.  
 elephant(s), 2, 15.  
 Eleven Works, 3.  
 English, 62; ~ education, 57; ~ language, 62, 71; ~ Society, 62.  
 ethics, 91-93, 97, 99, 103, 105, 134, 137.  
 ethnicity, 23, 24, 88, 89, 121.  
 ethos, 91, 96, 108, 135-36.

*Eṭṭuttogai*, 89.

European culture, 57.

European Society, 62.

evil spirits, 104.

Excrete, 120.

## F

Father, 106.

feast, 51-55, 118.

feudal lords, 87.

feudal societies, 88.

footwear, 105.

formal social culture, 61.

fragrance, 43, 44, 70, 73-77.

friendship, 39-42, 48-51.

fresh waters, 52.

## G

gambling, 9.

*garbhgriha*, 126.

Gauthama, 95, 121.

George L Hart, 27.

ghee, 7.

ghosts, 104.

God(s), 2, 5, 35, 37, 60, 71,  
72, 74, 90, 95-100, 104-  
06, 108, 109, 112-16, 118,  
122, 124-25, 131, 133-36;  
~ head, 3, 5, 135.

Goddess, 60, 90, 125.

good, 92; ~ ness, 94.

Gopala Krishnamachariyar,  
38.

Gospel, 4.

grammatical tradition, 23,  
72.

Great Maxim, 25.

Great Tradition, 90.

Greek(s), 1, 88.

*griha*, 126.

*grihastha*, 128-29.

*gurus*, 88, 108-09.

*gurukul*, 108-09, 129.

gynaecologist, 130.

## H

heaven, 9, 10, 57, 60, 121,  
135-36.

hegemonic bourgeois, 87.

hell, 135-36.

herculean task, 11.

hermit, 6.

heroic age, 9, 23, 25, 30, 64,  
89, 91, 94, 98, 121.

heron, 12.

higher, 92, 100.

Hindi, 128.

Hinduism, 3, 12, 88, 91, 93  
94, 101, 111-13, 115, 118-  
19, 126, 129, 134, 139-40.

*Hindu Dharma*, 110.

history, 25, 77, 89, 91, 92,  
108.

holy, 94, 120, 122.

honey, 4.

hospitality, 16, 58, 60, 61,  
121-22.

*hulla gulla*, 133.

Hungary, 115.

hygiene, 118-19, 124-25,  
130.

hypocrisy, 7.

**I**

ID, 107, 130.  
*Īgai*, 95.  
 Ignoble, 92, 101,  
*Īlavēṭṭaṇār*, 74.  
 immortal book, 4.  
 immorality, 103.  
 impropriety, 103.  
*Īnbam*, 4.  
*Īnbattuppāl*, 11.  
 Indian, 57; ~ culture, 70, 88;  
   ~ language(s), 62, 63;  
   ~ religions, 141; ~ society,  
   57, 62.  
 Indra, 121.  
*Īṇiyavai Nārpadu*, 14, 15.  
 injunctions, 6, 7, 91, 115,  
   129, 131, 138.  
*Īṇṇā Nārpadu*, 14, 15.  
 inner-self, 24.  
*īṇṇisai venpā*, 17.  
*īṇṇāl*, 32, 107.  
 intense sight of love, 35, 39.  
*īrai*, 95.  
*īraivaṇ*, 95.  
 Islam, 3.  
*Ī-Tā-Koḍu*, 33.

**J**

Jaina, 11; ~ authors, 11;  
   ~ monks, 12; ~ philoso-  
   phy, 11, 12;  
 Jainism, 6, 13, 25, 88, 90,  
   91, 93, 111, 113, 128-29,  
   135, 139-40.  
 Janaka, 38.  
*jīvas*, 135.  
 Justices, 130.

**K**

*kādal*, 39, 46.  
*kaḍaṇaṇi kātciyavar*, 102.  
*kaḍavuḷ vāḷttu*, 5.  
 Kaḍiyālūr Urirtiraṇ Kaṇṇa-  
   ṇār, 51.  
 Kaḍuvaṇ Ḫaveyiṇaṇār, 72.  
 Kākkaiṇṇipāḍiṇiyār  
   Nacceḷḷaiyār, 29.  
*kaḷ*, 9.  
 Kalabhras, 3, 90.  
*kāḷai*, 27, 28, 88.  
*kaḷiṇ*, 55.  
*Kalittogai*, 2.  
 Kambaṇ, 37-39.  
*Kamba Rāmāyaṇam*, 24, 26,  
   37, 39.  
 Kamil Zvelebil, 17, 27.  
*kaṇ*, 35-38, 40, 56, 76.  
*kāṇal/kāṇudal*, 34.  
*kaṇṇi*, 75.  
*karma*, 12, 13, 112-13, 118.  
 Karnataka, 3, 90.  
*karṇōṇ*, 26.  
*kārttigai dīpam*, 51.  
*Karupporuḷgaḷ*, 90.  
*Kāsu*, 17.  
 Kathiraiver Pillai, 62.  
 Kāvapeṇḍu, 28.  
 Kayattūr Peruvāyiṇ  
   Muḷḷiyār, 88, 134, 138.  
*keḷutagaimai*, 48.  
*kēṇmai*, 48-50.  
*kēṇmaiyar*, 50.  
*kēṇmaiyavar*, 50.  
*kevalyajñān*, 129.  
*Kevala Jñāna*, 111.

*kiḷaijñar*, 50.

Kiḷḷi vaḷavaṇ, 2.

*Kīlkkanaḱku* works, 16.

king(s), 2, 25, 26, 33, 53,  
88-91, 93-98, 105-06,  
108-09, 128, 130-31.

*Kō*, 95.

*koḍu*, 33.

*koḷgaic cāṇrōr*, 31.

*Koṇrai Vēndaṇ*, 106.

*Kōpperuñcōlaṇ*, 41.

*Kōvil*, 95.

*Kōvūr Kiḷār*, 2, 55.

*kōyil*, 95.

*kshatriya*(s), 93, 108, 121.

*kūdaḷam*, 75.

*kuḷam*, 75.

*Kuḷamurattut Tuñciya*

*Kiḷḷivaḷavaṇ*, 55.

*Kuṇṇam Bhūdaṇār*, 34.

*kuṇal*(s), 4, 5, 7, 16; ~ *veṇpā*,  
4, 17, ; ~ verses, 4.

*kuṇiñci*, 43-45.

*kūrṇam*, 35.

*Kuruntogai*, 43, 63.

## L

labour pain, 32.

ladylove, 41, 43, 52, 66, 74.

landlord(s), 98, 111,

language(s), 23, 33, 46, 62,  
71, 72, 77.

Lakshmaṇa, 37.

Literature, 1, 87, 89, 90, 117

liquor, 9.

lord(s), 87, 92, 94-96, 126-  
27.

love, 4, 5, 10, 19, 25, 26, 34-  
38, 42-45, 47, 57; ~ con-  
vention, 39; ~ feelings, 35,  
45, 89; ~ relationship, 46,  
48, 49; ~ poem(s), 1, 2,  
138; ~ themes, 1.

lower, 90, 98, 111; ~ cate-  
gories, 121; ~ class, 113,  
121, 133; ~ part, 100; ~  
strata people, 99.

## M

Macualay Education

System, 61.

Madurai, 72.

*magaṇ*, 68.

*Mahābhārat*, 9.

Mahavīra, 112.

*maithun*, 128.

*malai nāḍaṇ*, 45, 48.

Malaiyamāṇ, 2, 55.

*Malar*, 17, 18.

*māṇam*, 98.

*māṇbu*, 95.

*mañcal nīrāṭṭu viḷā*, 51.

*maṇṇaṇ*, 95.

*mantra*(s), 99, 116, 124.

*Manu*, 121; ~ *Dharma*, 121;

~ *Dharmaśāstra*, 121, 122.

*maṇam*, 95.

*Marudaṇiḷa Nāgaṇār*, 76.

*Mārrūrkiḷār Magaṇār*

*Korṇaṅkorṇaṇār*, 53.

masculine act, 87.

*Māta*, 106.

*māṭciyir periyōr*, 26.

Maxims of Truth, 4, 24.

*mēdaigaḷ*, 116.  
 mental tortures, 92.  
*meyyāya kāṭciyavar*, 132.  
 milk, 3, 12.  
 Mithila, 38.  
*mokṣha*, 129, 137.  
 monarch, 10, 89, 96, 106,  
 131.  
 morality, 99, 128.  
 mother, 106.  
 motherhood, 32.  
 mother sentiment, 29.  
*mudaliyārs*, 91.  
*Mudumolikkāñci*, 16.  
*mukti*, 129.  
*mulai*, 29.  
*mullai*, 54.  
 munificence, 1.  
 Munṛurāi Araiyaṇār, 13.  
 Murugaṇ, 72.

## N

*Naḍukal Valipāḍu*, 90.  
*naḍukkarra kāṭciyar*, 132.  
*Nāḷ*, 17, 18.  
*Nālaḍiyār*, 11, 22.  
*Nālaṭiyār*, 16.  
 Nallādaṇār, 14.  
 Nallanduvaṇār, 52.  
*nalviṇaigaḷ*, 135.  
*nalvirundu*, 60.  
*naḷyāmam*, 129  
*naṇbaṇ*, 39, 42.  
*naṇbar*, 50.  
*naṇbavar*, 41.

*naṇbiṇaṇ*, 41.  
*naṇbu*, 39-42.  
*naṇgu aṇivār*, 116.  
*naṇmai*, 62.  
*Nāṇmaṇikkaḍigai*, 13, 14.  
*Nāṇmaṇikkaṭigai*, 16.  
*naṇri*, 23, 61-70, 77;  
 ~ *cāṇra karpu*, 65.  
*narak*, 94, 134.  
*narceyal*, 62.  
*naṇpaṇbu niṛaindavaṇ*, 26.  
*nāṛram*, 23, 70, 72, 73-77.  
*Nārriṇai*, 64, 66.  
*nāru*, 74.  
*Naṭpārāydaḷ*, 47.  
*naṭpu*, 23, 39, 43, 44-50, 77.  
*naṭṭal*, 48.  
*naṭṭār*, 50.  
*Nāyaṇmārs*, 24.  
*nerippaṭṭavar*, 102.  
*nērisai veṇpā*, 17.  
*nigaril aṇiviṇār*, 103.  
 night-tryst, 74.  
*Nilaiyāmai*, 47.  
*Nirayam*, 135.  
*Nirvāṇ*, 129.  
*nirvāṇa*, 111-12.  
*nīti*, 71.  
*Nītineri Viḷakkam*, 16.  
 noble(s), 92, 99,; ~ deed,  
 100, 125, 130-31, 133-34,  
 136; ~ ethos, 135;  
 ~ men, 23, 29, 30, 33, 48,  
 57, 119, 122, 131,  
*nōkkal/nōkkudal*, 34.  
*nōkkam*, 34, 35.



*nōkku*, 23, 34-37, 39, 77, 79  
 North, 3.  
*nyāy*, 71.

## O

*okkal*, 58.  
 Orthodox, 88.; ~ codes and  
 practices, 88, 94, 98, 108,  
 111, 137; ~ creed, 101,  
 123; ~ ethical treatise,  
 135; ~ ethos, 108;  
 ~ Hinduism, 115;  
 ~ religion, 126.  
 Outer-self, 24.  
 Ox, 27.

## P

*Paḍiṇeṇ Kīlkkāṇakku*  
*Nūlgaḷ*, 3, 88.  
*Paḍumaṇār*, 11.  
*paḷagudal*, 48.  
*paḷḷar*, 91.  
*Paḷamoli Nāṇūru*, 13, 14.  
*pālai*, 2.  
*pahroḍai veṇpā*, 17.  
*pāṇar*, 91.  
*pañca bhūtas*, 100.  
*pañca māpāthakas*, 135.  
*Pāṇḍiya*, 3, 89, 90.  
*pāp*, 104.  
*pāpas*, 104.  
*paradavar*, 91  
*paṛaiyar*, 91.  
*Paripāḍal*, 34, 72, 73.  
*Pār-Kāṇ-Nōkku*, 34.  
*pārttal*, 34.  
*Paṭṭiṇappālai*, 51.

*Pattuppāṭṭu*, 89.  
*paurṇami*, 128-29.  
*pēḍai maḍanōkkam*, 34.  
 penance, 6, 13, 68.  
*peṇvaḷic cēral*, 8.  
*pēraṇivāḷar*, 130.  
 perfect souls, 7, 135.  
*periyār*, 32, 116.  
*periyōṇ*, 26.  
*Peruvāyiṇ Muḷḷiyār*, 100,  
 103.  
 Philosophy, 90.  
 phonemes, 23.  
 physical punishments, 92.  
*Picirāndaiyār*, 30.  
 pillar, 28.  
 pimps, 131.  
*piṛaṇil vīlaiyāmai*, 8.  
*piṛappu*, 17.  
*pita*, 106.  
 poet-moralist, 10.  
 politics, 10, 94.  
 Polity, 1.  
 pollution, 94, 116, 128.  
*pongal*, 51.  
*Poṇmuḍiyār*, 27.  
*Poruḷ*, 4,  
*Poruḷadigāram*, 52.  
*Poruṭpal*, 11.  
*poygai*, 75; ~ *ūraṇ*, 48.  
 Primordial Deity, 134.  
 priests, 91, 94, 99, 118, 123.  
 profanity, 94.  
 prostitutes, 131.  
 puberty, 51.  
*puja*, 127.  
*pulaiya(s)*, 100, 117, 134.

*pulaiyaṇ*, 116  
*pulaiyar*, 91, 131.  
*pulavu*, 74.  
*pulavunāru*, 74.  
*puṇyas*, 104.  
 pupil(s), 108-09.  
*pūppuc caḍaṅgu viḷā*, 51.  
*Puram*, 1, 2, 40; ~ poems, 2,  
 27, 42.  
*Puranānūru*, 27-30, 78.  
 purity, 94, 101-02, 105, 120,  
 134.

## Q

Quran, 3.

## R

Rāma, 37, 38.  
 Ramanujan, 27.  
 religions, 87, 88, 111, 113,  
 129, 134-35, 140,  
 renunciation, 6, 11, 25, 111,  
 128, 129, 143.  
 Russia, 115.  
 requited love, 2.  
*rishis*, 88, 112.  
 rules and regulations, 87, 91,  
 107, 131.

## S

*sadhus*, 88.  
 sage, 6.  
*sakhi*, 63.  
 salvation, 7, 93, 136, 140.  
*sambhog*, 128.  
 Sangam, 1, 57; ~ age, 7, 23,  
 26, 29, 31, 111; ~ antho-

logies, 64; ~ classics, 39;  
 45, 51, 76; ~ corpus, 9;  
 ~ literature, 1, 3, 89;  
 ~ period, 3, 4, 9, 26, 32, 90,  
 99; ~ poem(s), 26, 30-34,  
 39, 48, 51, 52, 63, 66;  
 ~ poets, 24; ~ works, 23,  
 26, 33, 52.

*sangha*, 135.

Sanskrit, 4, 71, 72, 78, 81,  
 88, 1121, 128, 138, 139,  
 140; ~ culture, 70, 71;  
 ~ *slokas*, 81; ~ tradition,  
 106.

*Śāntiparva*, 95.

*Sannyāsa*, 128.

*śāstra(s)*, 95, 112.

scholar, 93.

school, 94.

Scorpion, 103.

seacoasts, 94.

seer, 6.

Seven, 3; works, 3.

sex, 39, 48, 49, 51.

sexual relationship, 23, 39,  
 77.

Shuddhananda Bharati, 59.

sight of love, 34-36.

sin(s), 6, 8, 113, 123, 135.

sinful act, 97, 116, 135.

Sīta, 37-39.

slave, 89, 92.

slaves of the lord, 24.

Smile of Murugan, 17.

snake, 103.

society, 1, 7, 15, 16, 30, 32, 57, 63, 71, 87, 92, 93, 99, 106, 128, 131, 136-37.  
 stupid, 92.  
*śhūdra(s)*, 108, 112, 121, 139.  
*śūdras*, 121.  
 sun, 73, 100, 116, 132;  
 ~ rise, 76; ~ set, 114, 124.  
 supreme power, 96, 98, 105, 134.  
*surapuṇṇai*, 40.  
*svarg*, 94, 134-35.  
*svarg-narak*, 94.  
 sweethearts, 36.  
 sweetness, 92.  
 syllable(s), 23, 43-45, 74.

## T

*tā*, 33.  
*Taittirīya Samhita*, 122.  
 Tamil, 3, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 50, 57, 58, 61, 63-68, 78;  
 ~ culture, 57, 70; 71, 72, 74; ~ grammarian, 37;  
 ~ land, 3; ~ language, 33, 61, 77; ~ literary works, 57, 77; ~ literature, 17, 26;  
 ~ love convention, 39;  
 ~ Nadu, 57, 71, 76, 77;  
 ~ poem(s), 1, 29; ~ poet, 9; ~ scripture, 3; ~ society, 24-26, 67, 70, 71; ~ vocabulary, 42; ~ wise man, 30; ~ word, 39; ~ work(s), 11, 34, 58.

Tamils, 13, 14, 23, 24, 33, 51, 52, 58, 60, 63, 70, 72, 78.  
*tandai*, 67, 68.  
*tantra*, 99, 124.  
*tapasis*, 105.  
*tār*, 75.  
*tārṇārram*, 75.  
 teacher, 106.  
 temple, 95, 97, 104-05, 118, 120, 125-26.  
*tenpulattār*, 58.  
 thieves, 131.  
 thugs, 131.  
 tiger, 29, 74.  
*tilak*, 134.  
*tiṇṇai*, 59.  
*tiraṇkaṇḍār*, 101.  
*tirappaṭṭār*, 131.  
*Tirikaḍugam*, 14.  
*Tirukkuraḷ*, 3, 4, 11, 23-25, 31, 39, 42, 47, 49, 51, 57, 59, 63, 67, 69-71, 76.  
 Tirumāl, 72.  
*tirumaṇam*, 51.  
 Tiruvalluvar, 3, 5, 6, 8-11, 17, 24, 47, 48, 50, 68-70, 128.  
*tiruvātirai*, 129.  
*tiruvōṇam*, 129.  
*tīṭṭus*, 115.  
*tīviṇaiḡal*, 135.  
*tīyolukkam*, 69.  
*toḍarbu*, 48.  
*toḍargai*, 48.  
*toddy*, 9, 103.  
*tōlamai*, 42.

*tōlaṇ*, 42.  
*tōlar*, 50.  
*Tolkāppiyam*, 37, 52, 57, 89.  
*Tolkāppiyar*, 37.  
*tōli*, 2, 40-42, 45, 52, 63-66,  
 74, 77.  
 tribal society, 89.  
*tulākkōl*, 33.

## U

*uḍaluvavu*, 128.  
*udavi*, 68.  
*ulagam*, 56.  
*ulakkai*, 133.  
*ulagap podumaṇrai*, 93.  
 umbrella, 105.  
 union, 46, 51, 53, 54, 64,  
 138.  
 Universal Tamil Scripture,  
 3.  
*upāddiyāyaṇ*, 108.  
*upādhyāy*, 108.  
*upakāra guṇam*, 62.  
*upanayana*, 51.  
*Uṟaiyūr Mudukaṇṇaṇ*  
*Cāttanār*, 41.  
*uṟavu mūraiyoṛ*, 57.  
 urinate, 120.  
*uyir*, 46, 47.

## V

*vaduvai*, 76.  
 Vaidehi Herbert, 64-66.  
*Vaishṇavites*, 72.  
*vaiśyas*, 121.

*vaiśya(s)*, 91, 93, 121.  
*vaiyai*, 72.  
 valiant youth, 27.  
*vāḷkkai*, 43; ~ *tuṇainalam*, 7,  
 8.  
*vaḷḷai*, 75.  
*Vālmīki*, 37.  
*Vānaprastha*, 128.  
*varaiviṇ magalir*, 8.  
*Varṇa(s)*, 93, 95, 108, 121,  
 139.  
*Varṇāśrama*, 71; ~ *dharma*,  
 71, 122.  
*vēḍar*, 91.  
*Vedas*, 73, 88, 99, 104, 108,  
 112, 116, 123-24, 127.  
 Vedic codes and practices,  
 88, 91, 110.  
 Vedic *Dharma*, 110.  
 Vedic Hinduism, 88, 91, 93,  
 101, 112-13, 115, 126,  
 129, 134.  
 Vedic religion, 90, 111, 128-  
 29, 134-35.  
*vellāḷas*, 91.  
*Vēlir*, 8.  
*vēḷvi*, 60.  
*vēndaṇ*, 95.  
*veṇpā(s)*, 3, 4, 11, 14, 15,  
 17, 18, 21, 88.  
*veṇ toḍai*, 17.  
 versifier, 88, 100, 103, 125,  
 134.  
*Viḷambi Nāgaṇār*, 14.  
*viḷumiyār*, 108.  
*viṇaiyaṟivāḷar*, 118.  
*vīram*, 26, 95, 98.

vīrtue(s), 2, 5-7, 10-17, 23-26, 31, 32, 71, 87, 89, 91-92, 95, 109, 114, 117, 122, 128.

*virundiṇ maṇṇar*, 53.

*virundiṇar*, 121, 123.

*virundu*, 23, 51-61, 77, 121.

*Virundu Ōmbal*, 121, 123.

*virundupūṇal*, 52.

Vishṇu, 72, 73.

Vishvāmitra, 37.

Viswanathan, 67.

*vrats*, 88.

## W

war(s), 1, 27.

warrior(s), 1, 23, 26-28, 30, 32, 56, 57.

wasteland, 2.

wealth, 2-4, 6, 10, 11, 14, 19, 25, 32, 33, 60, 61, 63, 64, 89, 96, 97, 110, 111, 114, 117, 132, 142, 143.

Western culture, 57, 61, 62.

white, 92, 98.

wickedness, 94.

wild fire, 104.

wild river, 12.

wisdom, 3, 4, 20, 26, 31, 32, 67, 99, 100, 101, 103, 104, 105, 108, 115, 131, 132, 135.

whores, 103, 132.

womanhood, 32.

world, 2, 3, 5, 10, 11, 14, 25, 30, 56, 58, 61, 69, 94, 99,

100, 111-12, 117, 125, 130-31, 134, 136, 139, 143; ~ view, 12, 16.

worship, 71, 81, 96, 97, 100, 105-06, 114, 125, 132.

wrestlers, 130.

## Y

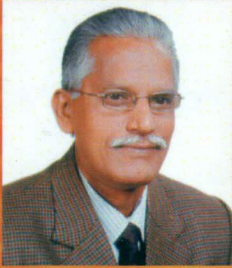
*yajña*, 60, 6, 99, 122, 128.

## Z

Zvelebil, 29.

## ETIQUETTE AND ETHOS ETHICS IN TIRUKKURĀḷ AND ĀCĀRAKKŌVAI

The present study, comprising three articles, attempts to highlight the cultural aspects of ancient Tamils and Vedic codes and conducts illustrated respectively in *Tirukkuraḷ* and *Ācāraakkōvai*, the didactic works of post-Sangam period (c. A.D. 200-600). The first essay titled “**Virtues in Tirukkuraḷ and Other Tamil Didactic Works: A Bird's Eye View**” discusses in detail some major virtues and some evil deeds stated in *Tirukkuraḷ*, *Nālaḍiyār*, *Paḷamoḷi Nāṇūru*, *Ācāraakkōvai*, *Cirupaṇcamūlam* etc. The second essay entitled “**Familiar Terms and Unfamiliar Connotations: Cultural Overtones in Tirukkuraḷ**” expressly deliberates thoroughly on certain unique recurring Tamil terms of cultural significance such as *cāṇṇōr* (noble men), *nōkku* (sight of love), *naṭpu* (love i.e. the sexual friendship), *virundu* (novelty), *naṇṇi* (good deed), and *nāṛram* (fragrance) as rendered in the classical Sangam works and *Tirukkuraḷ*. The third essay titled “**Sleeping to Salvation: Vedic Codes and Practices**” intensely discourses on the Brāhmaṇic injunctions pronounced in the didactic text *Ācāraakkōvai*. It poignantly deliberates on all codes and conducts that one needs to adhere sincerely to in his/her inner (home) and outer (public) spheres as prescribed by the poet Kayattūr Peruvāyiṇ Muḷliyār.



Govindaswamy Rajagopal (b. 1960 ) is Associate Professor, teaching Tamil and Comparative Indian Literature in the Department of Modern Indian Languages and Literary Studies, University of Delhi. He has served as Visiting Professor of Tamil in the Department of Indology, Institute of Oriental Studies, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland for two academic years (2011-2013).

G. Rajagopal has authored three books titled **Beyond Bhakti: Steps Ahead** (2007), **Mind and Conduct: Behavioural Psychology in the Sangam Poems** (2015), and **Cultural Poetics and Sangam Poetry** (2016) besides one book in Tamil titled **Kāmaṇ Kādaiṇṇāḍal: Ōrāyvu (The Ballad on Kama: A Study)**, (1986). Various reputed Research Institutions, Universities in India and abroad have published his research papers on Sangam poetry, Bhakti and Modern Tamil literary themes that include **Standing Anxiously at the Threshold: Nandan and Cokkāmēḷā**, **Wandering Naked: Śaiva Women Mystics in the Spiritual Empowerment, Tamil Voice Against Aryans: Bhāratidāsaṇ** etc.



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